

The Claim of the Supernatural = “Is there a God?”

Part 1: The Philosophical Necessity to *Decide*

- **Epistemology** is the study of _____: how do we know what we know—and how do we know it is true? (Or, in **Postmodernism**: “*Does truth exist?*”)
 - **Do you know you exist? How do you know?** Hinduism and classical Buddhism = All material reality is “maya”—illusion of material existence = “samsara.” That is why the Buddha in “Mahayana Buddhism” always has his eyes closed to all the suffering and joy of the world—it is an illusion. [**Matrix**]
 - **Is LOVE real?** How do you know?
 - **Does life have any meaning?** How do you know? [Existentialism of Sartre, Camus, Simone De Beauvoir: No. We each create our own.]
- **Ontology** is the study of _____, beginnings or sources.
- **FACT #1:** Only after we have determined our ontological _____ can we establish our epistemological _____.! In other words, we must first determine what we believe about our origins or source before we can determine who we are, what we know and how we know it (e.g., “*Is there universal truth, or is all truth relative to personal experience?*”)
- All human philosophy seeks to answer **three basic questions**:
 - **Where did I come from?** [my origins]
 - **Who am I?** [my existential identity]
 - **Where am I going?** [my destiny]”
- You cannot really answer the last two questions until you have answered the first.
- In other words, when we look at ourselves, our society, our material universe and our ethical choices [i.e. our moral values]; the primary or most basic question is:
 - **Is there a God?** _____ or _____? –or–
 - **Does God exist?** (Hans Kung’s book)
- This question is always either explicitly or implicitly **CENTRAL** to every philosophical or ethical system for understanding and guiding life.

EXAMPLES:

- **Carl Sagan:** “*In the beginning was the Cosmos. The Cosmos is all there is, ever was or ever will be!*” [No God, only naturalistic evolution]
- **Martin Luther King:** “*Letter from a Birmingham jail.*”
- **Karl Marx’s dialectic materialism:** “*Religion is the opiate of the masses.*”
- **Declaration of Independence:** “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*”

- The great **shapers of ancient and modern thought** often differed in their responses, but they all agreed on the validity of this question as the crucial starting point. **Why?**
- **CONSIDER:** If your answer is:

“No, I do not believe God exists!” then these outcomes must follow:

- **NATURALISM:** You live in an impersonal _____ (not universe), where **everything**, including humanity, is simply the accidental result of **time + matter + energy + _____!** There is no guiding purpose. Without God, man is simply the most complex collection of molecules that happens, by chance, to now occupy the top rung of the evolutionary ladder.
- **AUTONOMY:** Then all humans have no higher _____ in life but self or society: “*If there is no absolute by which to judge society—then society becomes absolute!*” These leads to **EXISTENTIALISM:** self-_____.
- **MORAL RELATIVITY:** There is no absolute or universal _____; no unchanging right and wrong; but only opinions and urges (guided by power and passion.) **Might = _____!** Nothing or no one has absolute _____: “*man*” is only an evolving animal in an impersonal universe.
- **TEMPORALITY:** _____ is the sure and final end of all humanity (Sartre’s definition of man). Man, as an individual, has no hope or ultimate meaning except to _____ his pleasure and _____ his pain [**UTILITARIANISM**]; or to perform his social duty and avoid shame [**DEONTOLOGY**]; during his brief second of existence in the flow of an impersonal universe!

EXAMPLES:

Bertram Russell: A Free Man’s Worship: “*Brief and powerless is man’s life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless ways; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow fall, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; ... to worship at the shrine his own hands have built.*”

- **Nietzsche:** “*If God is dead, man is dead! All that is left is the power of the warrior and woman for the pleasure of the warrior.*”
- **Darwin:** “*All life evolved from mutation and adaptation. “Destiny” is a blind evolutionary determinism based on the survival of the fittest.*” **Neo-Darwinian Naturalism** declares that the cosmos and everything in it is a closed system composed of unguided time, matter, energy and chance. [At the level of ontology (origins) this is as much a faith statement as is the belief in ex nihilo creation by God as an uncaused first cause.]
- If there is **no God**, then there is no hope of **eternity**, no hope of **any final meaning**—and with the death of _____ comes the hope for _____ (Suicide is pandemic in our culture—and much higher among the “haves” than the “have nots,” the rich than the poor,

the educated than the uneducated).

- Most people **deny this depressing truth** by hiding in a life of _____ self-fulfillment guided by moral apathy and comfort (great goal is to amass a huge pile of perishable goods in order to arrive at death safely and comfortably!)
 - **T-shirt: “The one with the most toys when he dies—wins!”**
 - **Little Boxes**
 - **“*What then?*”**

But What if your answer is YES, I believe GOD must exist? What then?