

A Philosophical Defense of God

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Lesson 1—What is Truth?

1. What do philosophers mean by *truth*, and what kinds of truth exist?

Answer: When philosophers ask what **truth** is, they are asking what is **real**, for it's self-evident that what is true is real, and what is real is true. **First**, there is **values-truth**, which concerns aesthetic values (of beauty, etc.), political values, & moral/religious values. **Second**, there is **material-truth**, which concerns alleged material objects, both small & huge, & their processes of change & interactions. **Third**, there is **history-truth**, which concerns alleged historical events.

2. Isn't values-truth a subjective truth, depending upon the individual's personal views?

Answer: Certainly, that's true of aesthetic and political values, although the latter is hopefully based on factual truths. Nevertheless, the values themselves are subjective in nature. When something is truly subjective in nature, we should rather speak of it as **opinion**, not fact, for facts/truth should be verifiable by others. Otherwise, there can't be any real difference between an opinion & a truth. Therefore, we should always make the distinction between opinions and facts, something that in our post-modern world is often not done. Regarding moral/religious values, the question of their being subjective or objective depends upon whether God or gods exist. God or gods who created intelligent creatures like mankind, by logical analogy, should be recognized as having the highest authority to determine moral & religious values since such values concern His/their own character—just as a dog owner naturally has the authority over his dog to set the rules of conduct and the like. See Lesson 6 for the question of the existence of God or gods.

3. But is any truth really objective, that is, verifiable by others?

Answer: 5th century B.C. Greek **Sophists** thought that all truth was subjective. For example, **Protagoras** (d. c. 420 B.C.) declared that everyone's views of truth are equally valid. But **Plato** (d. 347 B.C.) exposed the illogic of Sophistry by simply stating that anyone who disagreed with the idea that everyone's views of truth are equally valid would also be correct. So much for the ridiculous notion that all truth is subjective. Yet that ridiculous notion has made a major comeback in our post-modern world (since World War II & especially since the 1960s). You hear people speak of **my** truth, **your** truth, etc. People probably say this today because they don't want to insult anyone else. But we have confused tolerance & respect for there not being any objective truth. Instead, we ought to distinguish between truth and others' **opinions** about truth and respect the person even when we might disagree with our own opinion of what the truth is about something.

4. So are you saying that all truth is objective, that is, verifiable by others?

Answer: Yes. **First**, as stated under Question #2 above, there would be no difference between an opinion and truth/fact if the latter were not verifiable by others. **Second**, let us illustrate our belief that all truth is objective. No one can drive a vehicle on I-35 and go either north or south, never getting off that highway, and wind up in Los Angeles, California. It just can't be done. Sometimes a person will say that in some parallel universe, perhaps north is west and south is east. But that's pure nonsense because that's just talking about terminology. In that case, we would simply change our direction words. Therefore, truth or facts are objective, that is, they exist independently of anyone's opinions or perceptions & can be verified by others. And because the opposite of truth is a lie, and lies will get you literally & figuratively lost, one should seek to discover the truth that is outside of ourselves, thus avoiding confusion & error.

Lesson 2—Can Truth be Known?

1. Don't Total Skeptics argue that no truth can be known with certainty?

Answer: Yes. **Total Skeptics** 1st appeared among the Greeks in the early 3rd century B.C., although it was 3rd century A.D. **Sextus Empiricus** who made a more famous argument for this position. He argued that since we know only what our senses tell us about an object, we cannot know that our perceptions of an object are accurate? We cannot know the object as it truly (truthfully) is in itself because we can never **become** the object itself. Much later, Scottish philosopher **David Hume** (d. 1776) made several arguments against our inability to know truth with certainty. One of his famous arguments went something like this: No one can know anything with certainty because no one can experience the future. In other words, a boy kicking a soccer ball with his foot extended in the same direction for 1,000 times cannot know for certain that the 1,001st time he takes that same action the ball will move in the same direction as it did the 1st 1,000 times. Therefore, Hume argued that you cannot establish a cause-and-effect relationship between any 2 things.

2. Don't the Total Skeptics have a valid point?

Answer: Technically, yes. **Hume** highlighted the fact that a fact/truth is technically accepted as a fact/truth because of its high probability to be true. Because that's the case, there is almost always some theoretical room for doubt. But for us, the important question is whether that doubt is reasonable or unreasonable. **Hume** didn't go there; he simply insisted that therefore one cannot know any truth with certainty, period. One can object that **reasonable & unreasonable** are subjective terms because each individual must decide for himself what is reasonable or unreasonable. While that's true, we would argue that it's unreasonable to expect to derive 100% certain truth about much because no one has a perfect mind to understand perfectly what they observe or perfect tools with which to measure or observe phenomena to the Nth degree. But that doesn't prevent well-educated people from deriving very nearly certain truth in a host of areas.

3. What does theoretical doubt, no matter how small, require for truth to be known with reasonable certainty?

Answer: If any doubt about a truth exists, then by definition of the word, one needs to exercise **faith** in order to believe that something is truth. Many people get very uncomfortable with the word **faith**, thinking it's exclusively a religious term. But it's not. Instead, it applies to **all** situations in which any degree of doubt exists as to the truthfulness of an alleged fact. And there's nothing in the definition of the word that requires a blind faith either. Genuine faith is always based on evidence and must be exercised when you believe that the doubt is unreasonable. For example, when you enter an elevator that you know doesn't have a history of breaking down, even though you can't experience the future, you won't have a reasonable doubt about its ability to get you to the desired floor of the building safely. Therefore, you exercise just a little evidence-based faith in that elevator. And we face situations like this every day, and exercise faith every day. To live otherwise, is to become a "basket case", which is not a reasonable way to live one's life.

4. How can you have reasonable certainty about historical persons or events that you didn't witness?

Answer: If you asked an historian whether he believed **Julius Caesar** lived, he would answer that there are ancient manuscript documents from a variety of sources which are dated to his alleged era that speak of him and the many things that he did. Furthermore, it's unreasonable to assume that all of those sources are lying, especially if people who lived back then knew that no such person lived. If that were the case, we should have found at least some genuine manuscripts of that period exposing the writings & records that speak of **Julius Caesar** as frauds. But we have absolutely no such document. Therefore, any small amount of doubt about his existence—based only on the fact that the historian didn't live back then—is unreasonable doubt. Therefore, the historian would say that he is very reasonably certain that **Julius Caesar** lived and did the things that the historical documents say he did. So whether we're talking about history or other alleged facts, we can have reasonably certain knowledge of most alleged truths.

Lesson 3—Establishments and Truth

1. How are you defining the word **establishments**, and what is their role in relationship to truth?

Answer: An establishment includes the research institutions, scholarly journals, those who control the grant funds or other moneys, & the leaders in the various institutions in any given field of study. Their legitimate role is to help coordinate & fund various research studies in their field of expertise and to publish their findings in both scholarly journals and in the media.

2. Do establishments remain objective in their search for the truth?

Answer: Establishments, like the people who are in them, are subject to 3 weaknesses. **First**, they sometimes state facts as if they are reasonably certain when they are based on assumptions that a minority of its scholars dispute and/or are of such a nature that they can't be verified. It's only natural that they often don't spell out those assumptions to the general public because most people are not well versed in it, & most experts in any field have difficulty writing in ways easily understood by the general public. **Second**, each establishment reflects the dominant worldview of its experts, & worldviews by definition usually influence the conclusions that are reached. **Finally**, like people, the longer establishments exist & the more influence & power they have, the more entrenched they are likely to become—so that protecting their influence & saving face can **sometimes** become more important than the truth. This doesn't make establishments bad, but it does mean they should exercise greater caution to ensure that their assumptions & worldview don't hinder the work of seeking truth wherever the evidence takes them. See Lesson 11 for some faulty assumptions in the geological & biological worlds.

3. Does your cautionary criticism apply to religious as well as secular establishments?

Answer: Absolutely, because it's based on human nature. Particularly when the Medieval Church was so powerful, it was often blind to truth even when observations & mathematics made truths reasonably certain. One good example was the Church's view, based on its interpretation of the Bible, that everything revolved around the earth (a geocentric view). When evidence revealed a heliocentric view of our solar system to be reasonably certain truth, the Church ignored the evidence & harassed **Galileo** (d. 1642). This demonstrates the prudence of making certain the religious text is being interpreted correctly, just as the secular scholar should take great care to correctly interpret the scientific or historical evidence.

4. Can you share examples from the historical establishment of harassment due to its dominant worldview?

Answer: Yes. Today's prevailing worldview of historians is that human societies evolve in a technological sense from a primitive state of living toward an increasingly more sophisticated knowledge of science & thus of technology in how they build, farm, communicate, work, play, & move from place to place. However, there is intriguing (perhaps not yet persuasive) evidence from archaeology & ancient documents that suggests that some ancient civilizations possessed a great deal of technology & then lost it in one or a series of catastrophes. This implies that scientific understanding & technology hasn't always moved from the primitive to the more sophisticated. But the history establishment ignores that evidence entirely & denies publishing rights & grant funds to those historians who hold to the different worldview. We're not saying that the minority worldview is always the correct one, but that establishments often harass scholars who don't toe the "party line".

5. Can you give an example in the scientific community how a worldview restricts the search for truth?

Answer: The modern worldview of the scientific establishment in general excludes the possibility of a transcendent, supernatural agent as the cause for anything, insisting that only natural explanations are rational. It's true that such a supernatural agent can't be empirically proven because science, by definition, operates only in the material universe of time & space. However, if all natural explanations fail to remove all reasonable doubt of an alleged truth, then even the scientist should allow for the **possibility** of a supernatural explanation even though its evidence might be of a **philosophical** nature.

Lesson 4—The Truth about Alleged Material Objects

1. Who and how did a certain philosopher argue that material objects don't exist apart from perceptions?

Answer: The British **George Berkeley** (d. 1753) was the 1st notable philosopher to make that argument. He argued that since we can only experience an alleged material object indirectly through our sensory perceptions, we can't even know whether it exists outside our minds. In fact, what we really experience are perceptions or ideas. And since ideas exist only in the mind, not in unthinking objects, then material objects can't exist outside our minds. His answer to where those perceptions come from was that God is the source of those perceptions.

2. But doesn't that defy common sense?

Answer: Yes. Precisely because almost all normal people perceive objects largely the same way strongly suggests that's because those objects actually do exist outside our minds & are the reasons for our perceptions. But Berkeley's ideas are even more fundamentally flawed. **First**, philosophers rightly believe that what is truth is real, & what is real is truth. If, like Berkeley, one believes in God as Ultimate Reality, then He must also be **Ultimate Truth**—truth to the Nth degree, which means that God must be totally & completely consistent & can never deviate from the truth. **Second**, if God were the source of everyone's perceptions, then He is constantly engaged in deceiving beings by causing them to believe something is there when it isn't there. **Third**, He would also be inconsistent since some people see certain colors & not other colors. In Berkeley's argument, that can't be because some are color blind since he insisted that we only have an immaterial mind. Thus, God would be inconsistent in causing some people to see things in slightly different ways.

3. Wasn't there another philosopher with a similar yet different idea?

Answer: Yes. German philosopher **Georg Hegel** (d. 1831) took Berkeley's ideas 1 step further. Hegel insisted that Ultimate Reality was the Ultimate Thinker. He also believed that reality can't be partially true, nor can it be independent truths but must be total truth or reality in 1 entire connected system of truth. Therefore, he argued that alleged material objects are merely the ongoing expression of Infinite Thought (Ultimate Reality) thinking about itself. Like Berkeley, **Hegel** said that the individual immaterial mind does exist, but it functions as a receptor of Infinite Thought thinking about itself. And Infinite Thought (or Ultimate Reality) he pictured as an impersonal cosmic intelligence rather than a personal God.

4. So how does that make sense?

Answer: It doesn't. For if each individual mind is a receptor for Infinite Thought, then we should expect that every single mind knows all things. It's not rational to be an integral part of Infinite Thought without knowing all the truth that It knows. Yet not a single person knows all things, or even all things about any 1 subject.

5. What is your conclusion about the truth concerning alleged material objects?

Answer: There really are only 2 basic choices. Either material objects actually exist, or they are perceptions in our minds that come from a single source. Having rejected the arguments that they are only perceptions in our minds, we are compelled to conclude that material objects do indeed really exist outside & independent of our perceptions of them, and that they are the source of our perceptions about them.

Lesson 5—Cosmology and God

1. Is there a good philosophical argument for the existence of God?

Answer: There are at least 4 philosophical types of arguments for God, with many variations. My favorite is the **kalam cosmological argument**, which scholars debate originated with Christians or Muslims. It starts with the major premise that **Everything that had a Beginning had a Cause**. Empirical evidence based on observations made by people over the millennia is 100% that this is true. Thus, it passes the “no reasonable doubt” test. After all, you couldn’t truthfully say that the universe popped itself into existence because then the universe would have had to exist before it created itself. This idea is called spontaneous generation & was discredited in the 19th century by **Louis Pasteur** (d. 1895), among others.

2. But can’t physicists today “create” sub-atomic particles out of nothing?

Answer: They can create a vacuum filled with energy that will randomly “create” sub-atomic particles that vanish as quickly as they originate in a phenomenon called a **quantum fluctuation**. We’re not certain they actually exist at all, which is why they are called “virtual particles”. Furthermore, such a **quantum vacuum** is not nothing; it must be created in a lab by an intelligent mind & cannot exist in nature. This is hardly an adequate explanation for the existence of the universe!

3. What is the second major premise of the kalam cosmological argument for God’s existence?

Answer: The second premise is that **The Universe had a Beginning**. This must be true unless the universe is eternal since it couldn’t have created itself (see Question #1 above). The idea that the universe is eternal was the prevailing **secular** view since **Aristotle** (d. 322 B.C.) apparently became the 1st person to advocate the idea. It’s based on the idea of **infinite regress**—that if one could keep going backwards in time, he would never find a beginning to the material universe. There are at least 3 good arguments against infinite regress. **First**, matter-energy can only exist in time & space. For example, change is reflected in the motion of something, & that can be measured in time. And anything that exists in time is limited by time & thus cannot be eternal. The fact that the universe consists of various kinds of matter & energy, the universe cannot be eternal. **Second**, if the universe were eternal, there could be no process of radioactive decay of any inorganic or organic material. Such decay is a process that occurs over relatively long periods of time. But if there was no beginning to the universe, such a process couldn’t occur. **Finally**, any event at all adds to the number of past events. But if you can add to the number of past events, then by definition, there wouldn’t be an **infinite** number of past events. Therefore, since something cannot create itself, & the universe is not eternal, then **The Universe had a Beginning**.

4. So by a process of elimination, are you asserting that the universe had a cause?

Answer: Yes. **First**, nothing can create itself, which is the same as saying that something can’t come from nothing. **Second**, the universe can’t be eternal (see Question #3 above), so it must have had a beginning. **Finally**, logic therefore demands that **The Universe had a Cause**.

5. But since everything that exists must have a cause, then what was the cause of the universe’s cause?

Answer: If the question’s premise were accurate, then this would be a fatal flaw in the kalam cosmological argument for God’s existence, because you could ask this question into infinity, & you would never reach a **First Cause**. However, the premise of the question is **not** accurate. This philosophical argument does **not** insist that everything that exists has a cause. Rather, it asserts that everything that had a **beginning** had a cause. That’s quite a difference!

Lesson 6—The Nature of the First Cause

1. Why does the Cause of the universe have to be God or gods?

Answer: **First**, such a Cause must transcend time & space (**Transcendent**) so that He's not limited by those things & can thus be eternal & uncaused. In this way, **Aristotle's** terms of **First Cause & Uncaused Cause** are accurate. **Second**, the First Cause must also be **Incorporeal**, that is, He is spiritual & not material. Thus, He is an immaterial Mind. **Third**, His intelligent Mind must represent a **personal** intelligence rather than an artificial intelligence because the latter requires a personal intelligent mind to create, & yet this Cause existed before anything else. So the fact that nothing or no one existed to influence this Cause to create the universe means that He freely did so; & freewill is an essential attribute of a **personal intelligent Being**, & **not** an **impersonal cosmic intelligence**. By definition, this is what mankind has called God or gods.

2. In Lesson 5, you suggested that there's no such thing as the infinite past? Then how can God be eternal?

Answer: The word **eternal** denotes no beginning, no end, & no variation in one's nature. But speaking of an **infinite past** refers to something that has existed in the **past**, which is to say, in **time**. So it's correct to call God eternal because He had no beginning, but it's **incorrect** to say that He has existed from the infinite past because He transcends time rather than being a part of it. We prefer the word **timeless** because (a) it's more descriptive than the word **eternal** (some religious people think of eternal life in which eternity only applies to the future); and (b) it literally means "without time". Some theists avoid & object to calling God timeless because the pagan Plato's concept of God's timelessness was that He is incapable of reacting or interacting with His creatures and is thus an unknowable God. However, being outside time doesn't preclude God from assuming visible form, shape, & size in time & space so that He can indeed relate to His creatures. If we keep the latter in mind, then **timeless** is probably the best descriptive word to denote God's relationship to time.

3. What are some other attributes of God's nature?

Answer: **First**, since God transcends time & space, He must be **Omnipresent** (everywhere present) in relation to the material universe. But we must be careful not to imply that His essential nature is part of the material universe, as is the case with **pantheism**—the idea that God is in every carpet fiber, blade of grass, cell, & so on. Because He is transcendent, a clear distinction must be maintained between God & the material universe He created. **Second**, He must be **Omnipotent** (all-powerful). In Lesson 4 we introduced the concept of Ultimate Reality, referring to a reality that has always existed—which we have identified as God or gods. Power is an attribute of nature (not character), so as Ultimate Reality, God must possess all power. **Third**, God must also be **Omniscient** (all-knowing), because this truth follows from the fact that God is omnipresent & can see & hear all things simultaneously. Moreover, His eternal existence as Ultimate Reality logically leads to the conclusion that He knows all reality because He made all reality that was made.

4. You keep referring to God in the singular. Why do you believe there is only one God?

Answer: **First**, the English philosopher **William of Ockham** (d. 1347) enunciated what's called "Ockham's razor", which means that one shouldn't add any more causes unless necessary to explain a result. By definition, one omnipotent, omniscient God is sufficient to explain the existence of the universe. **Second**, the term **Ultimate Reality** to describe God implies something or someone to the Nth degree. The Nth degree of something implies there is only 1 ultimate. **Finally**, a famous question is illustrative: "What would happen if an irresistible force met an immovable object?" Of course, that's impossible, for if the irresistible force moved the immovable object, the immovable object would not be immovable. And if the irresistible force failed to move the immovable object, then the irresistible force would not be irresistible. Under Question #3 above, we showed why God is omnipotent. As such, more than 1 God might someday disagree among themselves, & set up the impossible scenario. Therefore, there must be only 1 God.

Lesson 7—The Character of God

1. Before we move on, why do you use the masculine pronouns to refer to God? Is He a male?

Answer: God is not a male, for that's a term that applies to a biological creature, not God. The English language only offers us 3 choices—masculine, feminine, & neuter. He's not biological, so neither male nor female pronouns are appropriate. As a **personal** Being, neuter pronouns don't apply either, as they would to an **im**personal force. As a transcendent, incorporeal Being, to interact with His creatures God must assume a visible form & shape in time & space. In other words, in a manner of speaking, one can say that He must **enter into** time & space. Likewise, a male enters into a female when interacting in an intimate way. Also, God did not give birth to the universe as if the universe came out of Him. He created it from a position of being **outside** of time & space. Thus, male pronouns are more appropriate in English.

2. What is God's character like?

Answer: Since God is Ultimate Reality, He's also Ultimate Truth because we've learned that what is real is true, & what is true is real. Scientists now realize that the universe operates according to such precise physical laws that if any of those laws were dialed even slightly one direction or the other, the universe would collapse. **First**, this means that God loves harmony & order. **Second**, since Ultimate Reality or Truth must be consistent to the Nth degree, God's order would have to extend to His creatures. One fundamental truth that many people have some experiential knowledge of is the truth that if intelligent beings operated on the principle of **selfless love**, people would be happier, healthier, & safer. In other words, there would be more harmony, happiness, & order in society. Therefore, God must be **Selfless Love personified**—love to the ultimate degree. In turn, this means that He possesses all the character attributes that are good.

3. What if God created an orderly universe only to change and watch things deteriorate with fiendish delight?

Answer: In other words, the question is asking whether or not God might actually be evil, & He suddenly flipped the switch one day & is now like a cat playing with a mouse by torturing it before finally destroying it. Remember that God is **Ultimate** Reality & Truth, reality & truth to the Nth degree. So if God were an evil Being, He would be Ultimate Evil. Such an evil God wouldn't even choose to create anything, for whatever He created must have harmonious laws to keep it in existence—and a God who is evil to the **extreme** could never choose to create harmony even for later nefarious purposes.

4. But if God is so good, why is there so much evil in the world?

Answer: We will answer this question in Lesson 15. For now, we leave you with the thought that if God is Selfless Love personified, such love requires Him to create intelligent creatures with free will so that they can choose to love Him in return, because without free will, there can be no genuine love. But free will carries the risk that intelligent beings will freely choose to depart from God's principles. And such a God must respect that free will even when it's exercised against Him. Of course, a God of Love must surely hate evil & thus be a just God. And eventually, a just God must rid the universe of the cancer of evil.

Lesson 8—The Triune God and the Issue of Rationality

1. What does God's character of love tell us further about His nature?

Answer: Love can only exist in a **relationship**; otherwise, it's only theoretical, not real. Since God is Love personified to the ultimate degree, God must exist in the most **intimate** kind of relationship.

2. What is the number of intimate love, and what does that tell us about God's nature?

Answer: In human terms, the most intimate love is between a husband & his wife, which makes the number of intimate love **3**—husband, wife, & the **relationship** itself. The relationship itself requires certain attitudes & behaviors, so that the relationship itself is a kind of 3rd entity. God has **always** been Love personified, which makes the relationship eternal also. Anything that's eternal is God. Thus, the relationship must also be a 3rd eternal **Being**. Christians call this **Trinitarian Monotheism**, or a **Triune God**.

3. If there are 3 eternal Beings, then why aren't they 3 different gods?

Answer: They would be 3 different gods **unless** each Being possessed the same mind, purpose, character, & will, so that there's no chance that a division or conflict can occur among them. In that sense, the 3 Beings equal 1 God. But it's **not** that each Being is **one-third** God so that it takes three-thirds to equal 1 God, because **each** Being is eternal, incorporeal, omnipresent, omniscient, & omnipotent. No being could be one-third omnipotent, for example, because that word, by definition, means **all-powerful**. Nothing can perfectly illustrate God's nature, but this might help: Think of a rope with 3 fiber strands. Only if you cut both ends of the rope & unwind the 3 strands would you have 3 ropes. God consists of 3 Beings, but they are figuratively & mentally bound together in 1 mind, purpose, character, & will. In other words, there is 1 God who exists as 3 distinct but figuratively bound personal Beings. This represents the "unity with distinction" principle.

4. How do you respond to the atheist's notion that belief in God is irrational?

Answer: Most insist that the idea of God means that He is very **simple** since an immaterial Being (or 3 Beings) has **no parts**. Therefore, it's highly unreasonable to believe that He has omnipotence, omniscience, personality, or free will. In short, He doesn't exist because belief in such a God is entirely irrational. However, the very atheistic notion of what is reasonable is based on science & empirical evidence. But the traditional idea of God is that He transcends the material universe & is thus beyond the reach or rationality of science. It would be analogous to expecting an ant colony to ever understand human nature. God's existence & nature are simply **philosophical imperatives**, for anything transcendent is beyond scientific exploration & thus beyond rationality.

Lesson 9—Complexity and God

1. Doesn't complexity in the natural world lend itself to a Teleological argument for God's existence?

Answer: Yes. And the most famous such argument was made by **William Paley** (d. 1805), an English clergyman & philosopher, in his book *Natural Theology*. Paley said that if you were walking on a path in the woods & came across a watch there, that if it were working & keeping correct time, you would naturally conclude that an intelligent person must have designed & made that watch. Then he added that the natural world contains far more complex organisms than a watch—which requires a much more superior Intelligent Designer. Thus, God must exist as this Intelligent Designer.

2. What are the philosophical objections to any kind of Teleological argument for God's existence?

Answer: There are 4 primary philosophical objections, the 1st 3 having been made by **David Hume** (d. 1776) & the 4th by the English **Richard Dawkins**. **First**, Hume objected that in reasoning from effect to cause that you can't attribute anything to the cause that isn't an attribute of the effect. **Second**, Hume argued that no cause can be inferred from a **single** effect. **Third**, Hume insisted that to compare anything that human intelligence creates to the universe is a false analogy because we really don't know how to identify what the universe is. **Finally**, Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* argues that if God existed as the **Intelligent Designer**, He would have to be **very complex** Himself. So who made God? It must have required an even greater complex being than God to have created God. Extended to its logical end, it would require an infinite number of increasingly complex beings. Thus, he concluded that God cannot possibly exist.

3. What are your arguments against these objections?

Answer: **Hume's 1st objection** said that since the natural world (the effect) is not perfect, you can't attribute perfection to God (the cause). But what if the imperfections in the universe weren't created by an imperfect cause, but were the result of some process that began after the universe was originally made perfect? Then the Cause of the universe could still be perfect. **Hume's 2nd objection** said that a person must experience more than 1 effect in order to gain any knowledge about its cause; but since the universe came into existence only once, we can't know anything about its cause. Furthermore, we can infer an intelligent designer for objects that we have seen being made by skilled craftsmen; but no one saw the universe come into existence. **First**, in the case of the universe, our argument for God is based on a process of eliminating all other causes so that His existence must be a **philosophical imperative**. Thus, his objection is artificially rigid. **Second**, no reasonably intelligent person would have had to actually watch a craftsman make something complex in order to know that an intelligent designer must have made it. An object's complexity (like a watch) by itself is sufficient to conclude that an intelligent designer made it. **Hume's 3rd objection** insists that we can't know whether the universe is more like a machine or a living organism, so we have no idea what kinds of processes were used to make living organisms. But the point of teleological arguments is that complexity, order, & beauty require an Intelligent Designer without regard for what processes were used to produce those qualities. It's the principle of complexity that is being analogized. Hume's point here is actually a red herring designed to take the focus off the principle of complexity & put it on different processes used to produce different effects—which is irrelevant. As to **Dawkins' objection**, "Who made God?" is an irrelevant & meaningless question because God transcends time & space and has thus always existed.

4. How would you summarize your belief that the complexity of life proves an Intelligent Designer?

Answer: Our experience with computers & other electronic devices compels all of us to conclude that they were designed by intelligent persons. Smart people programmed the computer software, which contains all the information in coded language. The presence of complex, detailed information is always associated with intelligence. DNA is much greater in complexity than any computer program, & each cell contains more coded information than the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. We're thus compelled to believe that a supernatural intelligence designed life. It's highly unreasonable to think otherwise!

Lesson 10—The Big Bang

1. What is the essence of the Big Bang Theory, and of what significance is it to your thesis in this series?

Answer: Because a red shift is seen in distant stars, & certain radiation is detected, the idea is that everything in the universe is moving away from everything else. Measurements suggest that perhaps about 13.5 billion years ago, if you reverse the movement away from each other, matter-energy must have been so concentrated into a singular tiny mass that it exploded. This “big bang” resulted in the “creation” of the universe of space, time, matter-energy, & the natural physical laws that govern the universe. The significance for our direction here is the vast age of the universe & presumably of earth—**long ages of time that is necessary for the evolution of life on earth.**

2. What are your basic objections to the Big Bang?

Answer: **First**, where did the matter-energy come from that exploded in the Big Bang? Even if you postulate some strange primitive form of matter-energy, we learned in Lesson 5 that matter-energy exists in time & space and thus cannot be eternal. **Second**, what force compressed that matter-energy to explode? Where did that force originate, for it would also have to be a form of energy, which can't be eternal. **Third**, the Big Bang Theory states that matter-energy, natural physical laws, & time & space itself were all created in the aftermath of the Big Bang—thus absolutely preventing the conditions necessary for the Big Bang to occur at all. In other words, the theory itself offers a complete refutation of its validity.

3. Are there any other problems with the Big Bang Theory?

Answer: One is the **cosmological principle**, which requires that an explosion postulated in the Big Bang would result in an even distribution of matter in every direction all over the universe. But instead of that, we find large clusters of matter, such as galaxies & other bodies with tremendous distances between them. A 2nd problem is the **Law of Conservation of Angular Momentum**, which states that once bodies are put into angular motion, they will remain moving in the same angular motion. It's one thing to theorize that the tiny mass of matter-energy could have been spinning before the Big Bang, accounting for angular motion in the 1st place. However, everything in the universe would have to be spinning in the **same direction**. But that's not what we observe. Instead, some whole galaxies, planets, & moons are spinning in the opposite direction of most bodies in the universe. Moreover, some planets in our own solar system—chiefly Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, & Neptune—have some moons spinning in 1 direction & other moons spinning in the opposite direction.

4. Is there any other evidence that troubles you about the Big Bang Theory?

Answer: Yes. Scientists know that a red shift occurs with tangential speed as well as with radial speed. That is, the observed red shift doesn't necessarily mean that the bodies in the universe are moving away from each other in a radial motion (as spokes are directed outward from a central point on a wheel). It could instead be produced by a **rotating universe** that is rotating at great speeds. **Also**, the very high temperatures associated with the Big Bang Theory would have prevented the resulting gas clouds from cooling & condensing into stars, because such high temperatures would have resulted in scattering the cloud gases until they dissipated altogether.

5. But what if God existed, and He used a Big Bang to “create” the universe?

Answer: We learned in Lesson 7 that God loves order & harmony. It's **inconceivable** that such a God would create some kind of raw matter-energy & compress it until it exploded and use the resulting explosion to create the universe—even assuming that all of the scientific problems could be overcome. Instead, it's far more reasonable to believe that such a God would simply think or speak the universe into existence and give it a variety of different motions.

Lesson 11—The Principle of Uniformitarianism

1. What is the Principle of Uniformitarianism, and what does it have to do with this philosophical series?

Answer: The principle of **Uniformitarianism** is the belief that changes have always occurred at the same rate they do today. This includes soil deposition & erosion rates, organic & inorganic radioactive decay rates, & the tree-ring formation rate. This principle, with the Big Bang, allows for the long ages necessary for evolution to have occurred.

2. What is wrong with assuming the Principle of Uniformitarianism?

Answer: **First**, one has to **assume** this principle even when we can't empirically know it to be true in the distant past. **Second**, there are factors that science knows can interfere & thus invalidate this principle. **Finally**, there's evidence that this principle doesn't always apply even in our own time and/or that our measurement techniques often provide conflicting results. Thus the Principle of Uniformitarianism is a philosophical belief whose evidence shows to be unreliable & uncertain.

3. Can you illustrate some of the facts you stated in Question #2 above?

Answer: Catastrophic events, such as floods, sometimes quickly wash away soil that would take decades or even centuries to erode during normal times. Devastating floods can also move large quantities of sediment and lay them down elsewhere. During normal periods, the principle of uniformitarianism does apply. But for deeper layers of sediment, what if the global flood legends in nearly every culture (not just the Bible) are true, allowing for discrepancies in details based on local religious & other factors? Neither side can prove whether a global flood did or didn't occur. But if it did, then much of what we think is true about the age of the earth from layers of sediment is wrong.

4. Can you respond to the dating methods that use radioactive decay rates?

Answer: 2 facts must be assumed. **First**, for organic matter, we must assume that the decay rate itself has remained constant. Under present conditions, this is substantially correct. However, if conditions in the distant past were very different, we can't know that these decay rates were the same then as now. Specifically, if a global flood occurred, then before that flood a possibly much heavier water canopy over the earth would have greatly limited the amount of Carbon-14 created in the atmosphere, thus showing older organic matter to be much older than it is. This would be so because Carbon-14 decays, so that measuring the relative amounts of Carbon-12 & Carbon-14 (both present in living things) can give you an estimated date for the death of the organism. **Second**, for inorganic matter, we must assume that the material being studied contains only the parent element or both the parent & daughter element when it was formed & that it hasn't lost any of it since it was formed. But the 1st can't always be known with certainty, & the latter is subject to elements being added or leached out (depending upon soluble factors). This is the reason for widely disparate ages sometimes given to material in the same environment or to organic material & rocks coming from the same place.

5. But aren't tree-ring dates reliably accurate?

Answer: Tree-ring formation is commonly believed to occur at the rate of 1 ring per year. But even under normal conditions, some trees either create no rings or an extra ring during a year. However, weather patterns with alternating strong rain storms & dry weather often create several rings in a year. Some of the earth's oldest trees date by the tree-ring method to ages older than any possible date for the Bible's global flood, yet all agree that any living trees today would have had to be growing only since that flood. But if that flood had occurred, afterward the oceans would be warmer due to volcanic activity & other heat-generating activity (such as the friction created by the moving of tectonic plates). Such an environment would have produced a highly unusual number of heavy storms, resulting in many trees producing multiple rings each year, thus showing them to be much older than they are.

Lesson 12—The Theory of Evolution, Part 1

1. Why do so many people today accept the Theory of Evolution in some form or another?

Answer: The simple answer is that many believe in evolution because the Scientific Establishment **dogmatically** teaches it as **certain fact** to our **impressionable young people** in our schools and through the media. It's difficult to stand up against that tidal wave. However, we also know that living things react to certain environmental changes by changing their color, the size of certain birds' beaks, and so on. We have observed those things, so they are facts based on science. Therefore, it's easy to see why so many people would assume that, given sufficient time, some in a given species will eventually evolve into whole different organisms.

2. So what answer do you give for those observable changes in living things?

Answer: Science has already given us the answer to those changes. We know that certain environmental changes, whether it be changes in climate, food sources, the introduction of new species, or whatever else, often results in the switching of certain genes off & the switching of other genes on. (We've all heard about dominant & recessive genes.) We prefer to call it genetic adaptation rather than micro-evolution because it's not the same mechanism that evolutionists teach is responsible for evolution (genetic mutation), because all of the variants are already encoded in the DNA. In this way, genetic adaption can't lead to macro-evolution because a life-form can't evolve into something entirely different unless the code for that macro-change is already in the DNA. And we know that only relatively slight modifications to existing bio-systems are encoded in the DNA.

3. What are your best arguments against evolution (as in macro-evolution)?

A. Life must come from Life: This principle has been confirmed many billions of times, & not once has it been falsified. Evolutionists believe that somehow the right chemicals came together in just the right amounts & in just the right environment, & then a spark of lightning gave life to the chemicals, which then evolved into the simplest life-form. Of course, they can't really explain where the chemicals came from in the 1st place. Furthermore, scientists have been unable to create life even under ideally-controlled laboratory conditions, even though the famous **Stanley Miller** experiment in 1953 is still noted in some biology textbooks as proof that naturalistic means can create life.

B. Random genetic mutations can't account for evolution because harmful mutations outnumber other mutations by at least a 10-1 ratio & would kill off a species long before it could evolve into something else: Natural Selection & Genetic Mutation are the 2 mechanisms used to explain evolution today. **First**, natural selection doesn't work on the principle of addition but subtraction. It allegedly allows the healthiest & strongest individuals of a particular species to survive long enough to slowly evolve into a whole different life-form, while the weaker majority individuals die off. Such death represents a subtraction from the total number of living organisms. **Second**, random genetic mutation is the mechanism that theoretically creates new organisms. But since mutations are 90-99% harmful to an organism, the very thing that's supposed to fuel evolution would kill it instead.

C. The principle of Irreducibly Complex Systems requires that several mutated parts of a bio-system must simultaneously evolve & be connected together in the correct way to make a new bio-system: Evolution ignores mutated parts that serve no useful function, & evolutionists know that it's highly improbable that several harmless mutations could evolve simultaneously. So they must insist that all of the necessary parts to make a new bio-system have a useful function for some other purpose until they've all grown & fasten together to make a new bio-system. While the slow rate of mutations might produce some parts with a useful function, it defies credibility to believe that all of the right parts would have a different useful function until all the parts evolved to produce a new bio-system. Besides, connecting all the parts correctly requires an intelligence that random forces can't provide.

Lesson 13—The Theory of Evolution, Part 2

1. What are your best arguments against evolution (continued from Lesson 12)?

D. The Absence of Intermediate, or Transitional, Forms in the Geological Record contradicts the Darwinian notion that living organisms gradually evolved into other types of organisms: If Darwin were right, then the fossil record should clearly show transitional forms of creatures as they slowly evolved from 1 kind of creature into another. Their absence was even troubling to Darwin himself, although he assumed that eventually they would be found. Some have really stretched interpretations in an attempt to show some transitional forms; but these have been inadequate attempts even by most evolutionists' standards. Therefore, this gave rise in the 2nd half of the 20th century to the idea called **punctuated equilibrium**, the idea that there were long periods of no or very little change followed by huge jumps in evolutionary activity. Of course, that is plainly contradictory of Darwinian thought. Furthermore, if an evolutionist can believe that huge leaps with the sudden appearance of new life-forms has occurred, then why can't he accept the idea that an intelligent God suddenly created various life-forms?

2. But don't archaeological discoveries like Lucy and other pre-humans' bones prove evolution true?

Answer: No. **First**, in the large majority of such findings, an amazingly **few** number of bones are actually together in 1 place. You can certainly eliminate some creatures even by the presence of just a few bones. But in most cases, paleontologists are forced to arrange the bones with an educated guess as to how they fit the original creature. As humans, sometimes it's difficult even for them to avoid being influenced by their own worldview that wants to find transitional forms rather than look for other explanations of skull shapes, and so on (such as a diseased deformed human, an ape, the possibility that they have placed one or more of the bones in the wrong places, or the possibility that they have placed a bone from a different creature found nearby with the wrong set of bones). **Second**, to rectify the presence of too few bones, often bones found nearby are assumed to belong to the 1st ones they dug up, an assumption often disputed by other scientists. **Finally**, the dates given for many such findings are based on the unreliable principle of uniformitarianism (see Lesson 11). Therefore, the ages given for these bones cannot be confirmed as accurate.

3. Okay, let's return to your best arguments against evolution.

E. The Second Law of Thermodynamics directly contradicts the evolutionary theory that all living things are evolving into more complex, sophisticated organisms: In other words, evolution declares that generally the trend is an **upward** one from more simple organisms to more complex ones. But the Second Law of Thermodynamics states that in nature, both living & non-living things tend to die & decay until they no longer exist—which is a **downward** trend instead. Therefore, for evolution to be true, it must sweep against the tide of natural law.

4. Can you summarize your best reasons for opposing the theory of evolution?

Answer: Yes. **First**, life comes only from life, as scientists have been unable to produce it even under ideal laboratory conditions. **Second**, random genetic mutations are overwhelmingly harmful to an organism, which makes this process wholly inadequate as an explanation for evolution. **Third**, it is very highly unlikely that each mutation would have a useful function until all the other parts are present by mutation to form a new bio-system; neither is there any mechanism that would connect all of the parts together to make a new system function. **Fourth**, the absence of transitional forms in the fossil record belies Darwinian evolution. And the suggested alternative would be just as miraculous as instantaneous creation by God. **Finally**, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, also known as the Law of Entropy, states that naturally everything declines into death or decay—which is the opposite principle required for any theory of evolution. For at least all these reasons, we reject any theory of evolution as **wishful** thinking on the part of those who don't want to recognize the existence of God, & as representing **muddled** thinking for those who wish to believe in both evolution & God.

Lesson 14—The Problem of Evil

1. If God is so good and all-powerful, then why is there so much evil in the world?

Answer: This is a very old question asked by atheists & theists alike. Of course, 3 possible answers exist for some. **First**, there is **no** God (atheists). **Second**, God exists, but He's not all-powerful. **Third**, God exists, but He's not good. But none of these answers satisfy those who believe that God exists & that He is both good and all-powerful. For these theists, many have struggled with a rational justification for a good & all-powerful God in the face of evil's existence. They seek for what scholars call a **theodicy**—a word based on 2 Greek words for **God & justice**. In this series, we've demonstrated that God exists (Lessons 5-6), that He's omnipotent (Lesson 6), & that He's good (Lesson 7). So we must find an adequate theodicy.

2. Would you address some inadequate theodicies that you have rejected?

Answer: There are at least 6 theodices that we reject as inadequate. A brief summary for each one follows:

A. This universe was the Best God could create because anything He created would have to be Less Perfect than He is: This was enunciated by German thinker **Baron von Leibniz** (d. 1716) & states that God had to create a certain amount of evil. But Leibniz's view of perfection seems equated with God. It's true that God is perfect in moral nature & that He possesses perfect attributes (e.g. power, knowledge). However, perfection is a quality only in association with what you're describing; in other words, perfection doesn't exist in a vacuum. Therefore, God could have created a perfect world in the beginning.

B. Evil is Punishment for Bad Behavior: **First**, if this were actually true, then only morally evil people would be victims of evil. **Second**, even if punishment in the form of evil only fell on evil people, the negative event would not be evil but justice.

C. Evil exists so that we can Appreciate Goodness: **First**, there's far too much evil in the world than necessary for us to appreciate goodness. **Second**, morally perfect people would **naturally** have appreciation of goodness & God.

D. The Evil of Pain and Fear are part of a Person's Warning System: **First**, there's a lot more evil than merely pain & fear. **Second**, while we do need pain & fear in an evil world to protect ourselves from some forms of evil, that wouldn't be necessary in a perfect world.

E. Evil is the result of Intelligent Beings exercising their Free Will to do something Evil: This theodicy emphasizes God's Love, & that love isn't love if an intelligent being has no free will. Thus, God must give intelligent creatures free will, knowing that He risks that someone will eventually choose to do something evil. However, it doesn't explain **natural evil**—things like natural disasters, diseases, the development of poisonous plants & animals, and so on.

F. Evil exists so that People can Develop Moral Characters: This theodicy argues correctly that one's character is developed by a series of choices that are made, because choices point a person in a good or an evil **direction**, which is exactly what defines one's character (as opposed to one's personality). But then it **incorrectly** assumes that evil in the world is necessary for even morally perfect people to develop their characters by striving against evil. But if you think about it, choices & having a free will are all one needs to develop his character. Yes, some of those choices must be choices to do evil. But **evil itself** doesn't have to exist for free will beings to make choices & thus develop character.

Lesson 15—The Cosmic Conflict

1. What do you understand to be the adequate theodicy, if there is one?

Answer: We subscribe to the Cosmic Conflict theodicy as the only adequate theodicy. We summarize it below:

A. Evil Originated among Intelligent Creatures that God had given Free Will: Since a good God wouldn't create evil, this must be the origin of evil in the universe.

B. An Intelligent Being very Close and thus Honored in God's Presence must have developed a Jealousy toward God and wanted to be worshiped as God: **First**, the very 1st being to commit evil, by definition, must have done so without any outside tempter to tempt him. **Second**, among human beings, often someone closest to power eventually desires **all** of the power & glory. Many kings & dictators have been overthrown by some of those closest to them. What else could have motivated a morally perfect being to become morally evil without encouragement from an outside tempter?

C. Our First Parents must have Committed the First Moral Evil on Earth: **First**, it's highly improbable that without being **continually** in God's literal presence & being honored by Him that any morally perfect person would commit an evil act without an outside tempter. Therefore, that very honored being so close to God's presence almost continually must have tempted our 1st parents, who must have faced a choice to do something contrary to God's will. **Second**, we say our 1st parents, because if God had created many families at the same time, most of those morally perfect people would have seen at least some of the results of evil and thus would have stayed away from it. Yet all of us are morally evil, & in some way it has been passed down to all subsequent generations.

D. When our 1st Parents Yielded to this Non-Human Tempter, they made this Tempter the Ruler of Earth: Since God is the Ruler of the universe, this non-human tempter must have desired his own kingdom, where intelligent beings would worship him. Then when our 1st parents yielded to him, they effectively transferred their citizenship to this evil being's kingdom now based on earth. This evil being is most often called the Devil by monotheistic believers.

E. The Existence of Natural Evil has several different causes, but we can be certain that it wouldn't Exist if Moral Evil had not existed First: **First**, from what happened after the introduction of moral evil on earth, the Devil must be a higher order of intelligent beings than humans. Although God alone has the ability to create life, the Devil must have the knowledge & ability to do genetic engineering in living organisms to engineer poisonous snakes & other creatures; to turn some plants into useless vehicles to try to choke out other, beneficial plant life; to change some harmless or beneficial bacteria & viruses into harmful ones that cause disease; & to create various kinds of natural disasters. Of course, God must have placed certain restrictions on the Devil, or else he would have destroyed the entire planet by now. **Second**, the **Second Law of Thermodynamics** (Law of Entropy—Lesson 13), which states that both living & non-living material things naturally run down & die or decay, is a natural physical law. Yet a God of Love couldn't have created this law. Therefore, it must have come into existence as an indirect result of moral evil. But how? God must have **partially** withdrawn from earth when He allowed our 1st parents to reject His Kingdom in favor of the Devil's kingdom (respecting their free will choice). If He had **totally** withdrawn, all life on earth would have instantly died because He is the source of all life. This suggests that the result of His partial withdraw from earth weakened the natural forces He created that hold things together. Over time, this weakened condition of both life & the structure of the planet must have worsened and led to increasing numbers & intensity of natural disasters like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, violent weather, and so on.

2. Why do you subscribe to this Cosmic Conflict theodicy?

Answer: It's the only 1 that maintains a consistent view of God's nature & character and reasonably accounts for natural evil.

Lesson 16—Evil and its End

1. When the Devil became evil, why didn't God destroy him? Or why create Him in the first place?

Answer: **First**, God didn't create the Devil. He created an intelligent free-will being who developed an evil thought until he turned himself into the Devil. **Second**, regarding your 1st question, if God had destroyed the Devil soon after he became the Devil, the other intelligent beings in God's heaven & elsewhere in the universe would have obeyed God from fear, not love. Furthermore, many would then always have doubts about who was right in that initial conflict, & this would only bring instability to God's Kingdom. **Finally**, if God had refused to create this being who later became the Devil simply because God's foreknowledge meant God knew that he would do this, it would have been contrary to His character. No one else but God would have known, but remember that He must be consistent to the Nth degree. In God's mind, refusing to create this being because He knew what he would become would have been like taking away his free will. And God can't do this.

2. When you get right down to it, what is the very essence of evil?

Answer: In Lessons 4 & 6, we identified God as Ultimate Reality. As such, He is the source of all that is **real**. Since God didn't create evil, then evil is in some sense not real. Therefore, we agree with the Church scholar **Augustine** (d. 430), that just like darkness is the absence of light, & cold is the absence of heat, **evil is the absence of God**.

3. Doesn't God's attributes of love and justice require an ultimate end of all evil in the universe?

Answer: Yes. In the meantime, we are all part of this "cosmic conflict" between God & the Devil. Since God is the source of all life, when evil 1st occurred on earth, all humans should have instantly died. The very fact that life on earth still exists, although with limits to its quality & duration, reasonably demonstrates that God has a plan to allow humans to freely choose a way of escape from evil. By developing a moral character despite our inherent evil bent, we show the universe that even evil beings are capable of standing up for God & show their love & loyalty to Him. Understanding the Devil's desire to be worshiped, it's reasonable to expect that someday, God will permit the Devil to conduct a final showdown over worship. Then when God's people stand up for Him, He will have to intervene to rescue His loyal people from what would otherwise be certain death from the Devil & his human followers—for in the end, God will win & cleanse the universe from all evil.

4. So the Devil does not have the same opportunity to redeem himself from evil as humans do?

Answer: Not now. It seems highly likely that if the Devil didn't seek to be restored when he was still based in God's literal, glorious presence, that he had gone too far in the wrong spiritual direction & had thus fixed his character in evil so that God could do nothing to win him back.

5. After evil is finally eradicated, with free-will beings, isn't there a chance that evil could arise again?

Answer: Yes & No. Yes, in theory evil could arise again because a God of Love will continue to give His intelligent creatures free will. And with free will, there is the theoretical possibility that evil could arise again. However, human beings already rescued from evil, along with all other intelligent beings in the universe who have witnessed what evil has done & how patient God was with allowing the Devil to show the principles of his kingdom & how infinitely fair God has been in the cosmic conflict, it's inconceivable that any intelligent creatures would ever again choose evil. For that reason, it's probable that God will then prevent new births & not create new intelligent beings—because such new beings would never have witnessed the results of evil.

Lesson 17—The Problem of Death—Reincarnation?

1. How has man dealt with death as part of the human experience?

Answer: Of course, atheists think that there's nothing after death, that it's the final end. But others have dealt with it in 3 fundamental ways, along with different variations: (a) Reincarnation, (b) Immortal Soul (or spirit), & (c) Holistic View. In this Lesson, we talk about **reincarnation**.

2. What is the belief in reincarnation?

Answer: Reincarnation declares that when certain living things die, either the immortal soul or some other essence is reincarnated into another living thing at its earliest stage of life (e.g. fetus, egg, seed). This cycle of reincarnations occurs until the soul or other essence reaches the level of selfless purity, at which point the essence or person goes to live in a heaven **or** loses its individual identity & becomes one with the impersonal cosmic intelligence.

3. What do you think about reincarnation? Does it take place or not?

Answer: We have 4 fundamental objections to any theory of reincarnation, as outlined below:

First, the huge explosion in human population from 200 million at the time of the Christian Jesus to more than 7 billion today suggests there weren't enough people in the past to reincarnate into the people of today. Of course, believers retort that several different life-forms participate in the reincarnation process, not just humans. However, they also teach that karma—the generating of good & evil words/deeds—determines into what a life-form is reincarnated. But the huge explosion in humans would mean that so many creatures, including humans, have been generating huge amounts of good karma since being human is near the top of the reincarnation “chain”. But that certainly isn't what history reveals.

Second, if reincarnation were true, we'd expect many people could remember something about their past lives. Instead, believers teach that such memories are rare & usually only occur in a deep state of meditation or altered state of consciousness. They insist that the soul (e.g. Hinduism) or karma (Buddhism) knows things the mind doesn't know. But this doesn't ring true, because if one's soul or karma is the **real** “you”, then one's mind knows what the soul or karma knows.

Third, all versions of reincarnation have a fatal flaw in the mechanism that causes reincarnation. Believers teach that the soul (e.g. Hinduism) or karma (Buddhism) automatically knows what its next reincarnation is. But how can a soul direct itself into a fetus, egg, or seed that already exists? Or how can karma—a moral principle—combust into anything? (Buddhism teaches no soul, so a life-form's karma simply combusts into another life-form at the death of the body.)

Fourth, the concept of karma in all reincarnation belief systems states that every good word/deed **must** return on that creature, & the same is true for every evil word/deed. We might agree that this **should** be the case, but life doesn't **always** work that way for anyone. In fact, the assumption that it will always work that way is an argument for reincarnation. In other words, the fact that this principle of karma doesn't always work in the same lifetime proves that there must be many lifetimes. But this is circular reasoning: You assume something you can't prove (that every good & evil word/deed must come back on a person) in order to prove something you must assume (reincarnation exists).

For all of these reasons, we are compelled to reject all versions of reincarnation.

Lesson 18—The Problem of Death—Immortal Soul?

1. What is the belief in an Immortal Soul?

Answer: This belief states that every human being possesses an immaterial immortal soul or spirit, which is the essence of the person. When the person dies, only the body dies, & the immortal soul or spirit either goes to a holding area to await the end-time judgment, to purgatory to be finally cleansed of all evil, or immediately to its reward of heaven or hell.

2. What do you think about the idea that everyone possesses an Immortal Soul or Spirit?

Answer: We have 5 fundamental objections to the notion of an Immortal Soul or Spirit, as outlined below:

First, anything that's immaterial must also be **eternal** because it transcends space & thus time. So the position that the soul or spirit is immaterial is tantamount to saying that the essence of a person is that he is God, for only God is immaterial. But we all know we fall very short of omnipotence, omniscience, and so on. To get around that, some theists insist that God puts a part of Himself in each person. But God is **indivisible**—that is, He can't be reduced by giving away parts of His nature since there's no such thing as partial omnipotence, for example. Or, to say that God **creates** an immaterial soul or spirit is also self-contradictory because anything immaterial can't be created since it's eternal in nature.

Second, there is the age-old question that has never been satisfactorily answered by anyone: "How can an immaterial mind or soul affect or move a material body?" Many believe the soul or spirit & the mind are 2 different entities. Nevertheless, they must interact with each other & the physical body in some way, assuming they exist. For an immaterial entity to interact with something physical would be like attempting to use a fictional immaterial screwdriver on a physical screw; it just can't happen. If anyone suggests that the immaterial soul &/or mind sends out some kind of electromagnetic wave that's received & translated into physical motion by the physical body, we would remind you that all forms of energy are another form of matter—which an immaterial entity couldn't possess & still be truly immaterial.

Third, if the human soul or spirit is the essence of the person, how can the real **you** be 1 distinct **part** of you? For example if you pulled a swing set apart & lay each piece separately on the ground, you couldn't find the **real** swing set. Instead, you'd only find the individual parts of the swing set. There is no distinct part of the swing set that is the essence of, or the real, swing set. The **whole** swing set is the **real** swing set. Likewise, there is no distinct essence of a person somewhere inside the person. The **real** person is the **whole** person.

Fourth, we know that our 1st parents must have been created immortal, for under a God of love & justice, death could only result from moral evil. But if their evil act only resulted in the death of the **physical body** (with their alleged immortal souls living on somewhere else), then it must be that their physical bodies were **particularly** guilty of committing that evil act. However, human experience tells us that **evil begins in the mind**; thus the guilt in evil behavior is **primarily mental** rather than physical, even though the whole person is guilty of most evil acts. Therefore, if God only deprived our 1st parents of **physical** immortality, He made a terrible mistake, for He should have taken away the immortality of their entire beings. Since God doesn't make mistakes, we must conclude that God originally gave them what theologians call **conditional immortality**—conditional upon them passing the loyalty test. And when they failed their loyalty test, God took away their entire immortality. This means that human nature never had, nor now has, **innate** immortality—that is, immortality that's part of their essential or inherent nature, such as an Immortal Soul or Spirit.

Fifth, since God is the source of **all** life, by definition, He's the only 1 who could possibly possess an **innate** immortality. No created being, no matter how intelligent, could have life except that it was given as a **gift** to him by God.

For all of these reasons, we are compelled to reject all notions of an Immortal Soul or Spirit.

Lesson 19—The Problem of Death—Resurrection?

1. What is the Holistic View of Death?

Answer: This view teaches that there's no separate self (soul or spirit) which is immortal. There is simply the whole person, so that when a person dies, the whole person is dead.

2. Do your previous responses to Reincarnation and the Immortal Soul mean that you hold the Holistic View?

Answer: Yes. Review Lessons 17 & 18 for the philosophical arguments we made on this subject.

3. But how do you view out-of-body or near-death experiences?

Answer: Sometimes people who are near death, or who suffer a traumatic experience later report that it felt as if their mind left the body & looked down upon it or otherwise saw strange lights and/or tunnels. **First**, we know that when the brain is partially deprived of oxygen, as in many traumatic situations, a person can hallucinate. Certain drugs, some recreational & others sometimes used in anesthesia, can also produce hallucinations similar to reports of out-of-body experiences. **Second**, there is a whole class of researchers who have a bias toward these out-of-body experiences, & investigators' biases have demonstratively influenced the "memories" of many people. **Third**, most of these investigators don't allow non-believers in these experiences access to the audio records of their subjects' interviews to check for leading questions. Even if our 2nd & 3rd points were not true, the 1st one about the brain being partially deprived of oxygen would be sufficient to conclude that these experiences aren't evidence that man has an Immortal Soul.

4. Do you believe in the resurrection of the body?

Answer: Yes. A God of love & justice must have a plan to eventually rid the universe of both moral & natural evil. This present "cosmic conflict" must eventually end (see Lesson 16). Such an end to evil from a God that we've described in this series of Lessons will surely restore those who gave their loyalty to Him. Since that would have to include those who have already died, He will have to restore them by means of a **resurrection** because they are currently in their graves.

5. Are there any additional arguments that you believe support the Holistic View?

Answer: Yes, there's at least 1 more, although it's of a more **practical** nature rather than of a philosophical nature. It is true that virtually all monotheistic believers believe in a resurrection of the body. However, if an alleged Immortal Soul is alive in heaven, hell, purgatory, or a holding place, what is the purpose of the resurrection of the body? You'd have to believe that God will round up all the souls of people, resurrect their physical bodies, & place the right souls in the right bodies, & then send the whole persons—body & soul—to their ultimate reward. The God we've described in this series of Lessons is a God of order & purpose, not of clumsiness. But to believe in an Immortal Soul & the bodily resurrection makes for a very clumsy series of events. Besides, if people already in a heaven have no bodies, why would God want to give them one? And if, as some believe, people there already have a Celestial body, of what purpose is it for them to get their previous body back instead? The hope of the restored is either in the **resurrection** or in the **Immortal Soul**. It simply can't logically be **both**.

Lesson 20—Ultimate Truths Summarized

First, truth as distinguished from opinion, is objective & verifiable by other people because it exists independently of our perceptions or understanding of truth. Therefore, all should see to find the truth as it really is despite our current views.

Second, while there may be some doubt about alleged truth, we should ask if such doubt is reasonable or unreasonable. Wherever there's unreasonable doubt about what truth is, then faith should be exercised to accept it as truth.

Third, all establishments, be they the experts in secular or religious matters, have a tendency to defend their worldview & reject statements of truth that conflict with that worldview and harass other seekers of truth with different worldviews.

Fourth, material objects, both animate & inanimate, actually exist apart from our perceptions of them. Thus, the material universe is objectively out there.

Fifth, since something can't come from nothing, & the universe can't be eternal, then the material universe had a beginning, which by definition must be caused by the First Cause or Uncaused Cause, an entity which as always existed.

Sixth, the First Cause must transcend time & space and thus be Incorporeal or spiritual in nature. He must have personal intelligence & a free will, which makes Him a personal Being, not an impersonal cosmic intelligence. And He must be 1. This is what man has called God.

Seventh, God is Love personified, loves order & harmony, & is full consistent. Therefore, He is Selfless Love personified.

Eighth, God's Love makes God exist in relationship. His intimate relationship means that He must exist as 1 God in 3 distinct but fully united Beings. This is Trinitarian Monotheism, or the Triune God.

Ninth, the complexity within life implicitly means that God is the Intelligent Designer of the universe, because highly sophisticated intelligence in coded form is always associated with intelligence.

Tenth, the Big Bang Theory contradicts itself & thus precludes it as the answer for how the universe began.

Eleventh, the Principle of Uniformitarianism is that all processes of change have always occurred at the same rate they do today. But there are numerous reasons to suspect this principle & the ages given to organic & inorganic material on earth.

Twelfth, genetic adaptation, based on information already in the DNA, accounts for relatively small changes in living things. But several scientific facts make evolution highly unlikely as an explanation for life in general that we find today.

Thirteenth, the Cosmic Conflict theodicy is the only 1 that maintains a consistent view of God's nature & character and reasonably accounts for both moral & natural evil.

Fourteenth, when you get right down to it, evil is the absence of God just as darkness is the absence of light & cold is the absence of heat. The God of Love hates evil & must someday put a complete end to all moral & natural evil in the universe. And when He does, evil won't rise ever again anywhere in the universe.

Fifteenth, the riddle of death is not resolved by Reincarnation or the Immortality of the Soul, but by the Resurrection of the whole person. This must be because **(a)** since God is the source of all life, any creature's life must be a gift from God & not something he possesses innately within himself, and **(b)** theologies that attempt to combine the Immortal Soul with physical resurrection are incoherent & clumsy, not befitting a God of order & harmony.