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Cosmological Argument

2 messages

David Roemer <david@dkroemer.com>
 To: Uri Nodelman <editors@plato.stanford.edu>

Sat, Dec 31, 2016 at 8:56 AM

Dear Uri,

I've been reaching out to philosophers about your query, and have gotten some responses you might look at.

This is an article about the cosmological argument by a philosophy professor from Fordham:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/t5ieh1aw2lh1api/Real%20Distinction.pdf?dl=0>

I posted a critical comment about this article because, like the SEP entry, it does not explain the cosmological argument in a way a non-philosopher would understand. What follows is a quote from the article and my comment. The recipient of the quoted letter was Fr. Xavier Clooney, S.J., of the Harvard School of Divinity. My letter to Fr. Clooney expresses my ideas about why people obscure the cosmological argument.

"But, in fact, this argument is only a part of a larger argumentation, which as a whole intends to prove the real distinction of essence and existence in creatures and the identity thereof in God."

All of the religions in the world tell us that we pay for our sins after we die. This means everyone should know and understand the arguments for God's existence.

Metaphysics and science are two separate methods of inquiry that stand beside each other as equals. According to metaphysics, human beings exist and a human being is a composition of two principles: essence and existence. It follows logically from this that there exists a pure act of existence without a limiting essence, which the Near Eastern religions call God.

Philosophy is a method of inquiry above another method. The question of the best way to do science is a philosophical question. Asking whether or not a human is really a composition of essence and existence is a philosophical question. It is worse than discussing how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy recently asked me to document my criticism of their entry on the "cosmological argument." I asked a prominent Catholic scholar for help, and was rebuffed. What follows is excerpts from my email to him:

Dear Fr. XXXXX,

I am trying to understand how a Jesuit priest can say he is not "an expert on the cosmological argument." The Catholic Church teaches that we know God exists from reason. What would you say to a college student who asked you how we know God exists?

My guess is that you would be very troubled by such a question. If you use the scientific argument (What caused the Big Bang?), the student might be intelligent and knowledgeable enough to realize this is an absurd argument. If you give the cosmological argument (What causes finite beings?), the student may not understand the argument.

The other possibility is that the Catholic Church in the United States is promoting the scientific argument and you don't want to antagonize your colleagues.

There is another possible explanation I have for your comment. The cosmological argument is just an argument, not a proof. You can refute the argument by saying it is not persuasive, has no content, and is contradictory. You don't know how to respond to this refutation.

The scientific argument, on the other hand, is not even an argument because it is so absurd. It can be totally squashed by saying the argument is an exercise in circular reasoning. You DO know how to respond to this refutation. What you would say is, "You have a materialistic world view."

I have another explanation for your comment. An honest person would have to admit that you cannot prove God exists. But you can prove that human beings are embodied spirits and that human beings did not evolve from animals. What this

means is that anyone who denies this is a liar. Following the principle of not "throwing your pearls before swine," you should sever your relations with people who say human beings evolved from animals. You don't want to do this. You want to keep on good terms with atheists.

Evidence that Fr. Robert Spitzer of the Magis Center for Faith and Science is especially concerned about keeping good relations with atheists is that he is helping the American Journal of Physics cover up the mistake it made in publishing an article about evolution and the second law of thermodynamics. See

https://www.academia.edu/20939526/An_Analogy_Between_Nazi_Germany_and_the_United_States

Very truly yours,
David Roemer

David Roemer <david@dkroemer.com>
To: Uri Nodelman <editors@plato.stanford.edu>

Sat, Dec 31, 2016 at 7:40 PM

Dear Uri,
I've attached an email I got from a prominent Catholic philosopher praising my fight against bad arguments for God's existence.

What follows is my review of a book by Thomas McFadden, "Creation, Evolution, and Catholicism: A Discussion for Those Who Believe." My review is at:

https://www.amazon.com/review/R1ORSMQLE4JMDO/ref=cm_cr_dp_title?ie=UTF8&ASIN=1530654769&channel=detail-glance&nodeID=283155&store=books

Pseudoscience is lying about science in order to promote your convictions about religion. The author's thesis is that atheistic pseudoscience is the cause of the Catholics losing their faith. My thesis is the reason the Catholic Church in America is in decline is that Catholic apologists engage in worse pseudoscience than atheists and do not know how to refute atheistic pseudoscience. Another possibility is that Catholic apologists do not want to refute atheistic pseudoscience because they want to maintain good relations with atheists.

The author quotes a like-minded author as follows:

The Marist Brothers who taught me at that time would tell their students that Catholics are free to believe that evolution took place, as long as they understood it to be a process begun by God, and one in which human beings were created when God infused a soul into the evolving creature that became man. This was the same understanding taught to me by Jesuit priests at Fordham in the 1960s.(location 631)

To explain my thesis, I will use this quote from an atheist:

Catholics could believe whatever science determined about the evolution of the human body, so long as they accepted that, at some time of his choosing, God had infused the soul into such a creature. I also knew that I had no problem with this statement, for whatever my private beliefs about souls, science cannot touch such a subject and therefore cannot be threatened by any theological position on such a legitimately and intrinsically religious issue. (Stephen Jay Gould, Natural History, March 1997 13th paragraph)

McFadden's thesis, if I understand him correctly, is that the Marist/Jesuit point of view is "theistic evolution," which supports belief in evolution rather than belief in the Bible. Hence, the Marist/Jesuit statement supports the atheistic pseudoscience of Gould, and thereby causing educated Catholics to lose their faith.

My thesis is that the Marist/Jesuit quote is more absurd than the Gould quote. Rational people, not knowing any better, will side with Gould.

According to the Catholic Church, human beings inherit the stain of original sin from their parents through sexual generation. The idea that God infuses a soul into an embryo is nonsense. The doctrine of purgatory for the soul that remains after the body dies is just theological speculation. Catholics believe in "life everlasting" and the Second Coming. In other words, the idea that human beings "have souls" is heretical nonsense. It is pseudoscience, if you speak of the "evolution of the body." Gould is quite right to dismiss the Marist/Jesuit concept of the soul in a respectful manner.

Knowing better, I side with the Marist/Jesuit because Gould is a liar. His lie is to say that human beings evolved from animals. The truth is that homo sapiens sapiens evolved from animals, not human beings. A human being has free will and the conscious knowledge of human beings, not the sense knowledge of animals. We know that animals can see, hear, and solve easy problems because we see and hear animals doing this. We don't know how we know we have free will, conscious knowledge, and can create images and other mental beings. This is why human beings are equal to one

another and superior to animals. This is why slavery is wrong, but is it okay to own animals and use them for food. A homo sapiens sapiens is a hypothetical creature discussed in biology textbooks. Gould and his like would never admit this. McFadden and his like would never call Gould a liar.

If you want to learn what the human soul is read *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysic*, by W. Norris Clarke, S.J., who was my metaphysics teacher in 1963.

Very truly yours,
David Roemer

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