Does Your Truth Match Reality?
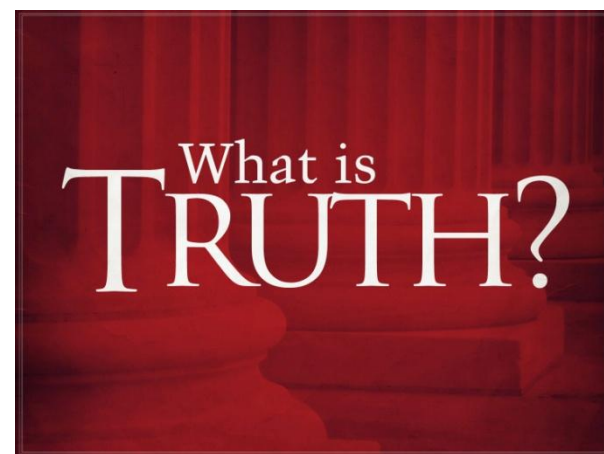
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Overview

- What Is The Issue?
- Some Definitions
- Arguments For God's Existence
- Essential Principles of Knowledge
- How Do We Know What is True?
- Use of Logic in Apologetics
- Contrasting Views of Truth
- Is Truth Knowable?
- What is Truth?

The Truth Issue

- Your "truth" is what you believe to be true

- How do you know it is true?
    - Based on presupposition?
    - Verified by credible evidence?

- Is the Christian Truth true?
    - Looking at the evidence
    - Does the evidence support Christian Truth?

- What about Atheism? Evolution? Creation?

- What about Mormonism? Hinduism? Buddhism?

HURT ME WITH THE TRUTH
—— BUT NEVER ——
COMFORT ME WITH A LIE

Questions About Truth

- Do we know because of the evidence:
  - From science, history or archaeology?

OR

- Do we believe because of:
  - Revelation, e.g. Holy Scripture?
  - Human reason, i.e. Logic?
  - Authority, e.g. Church tradition?
  - Human experience?

Some Definitions

- Agnostic – one who does not know if God exists
- Apologetics – rational justification/defense of one's beliefs
- Deism – God created the world but is not involved in the world
- Epistemology – the study of how we know
- Fideism – no rational way to justify one's beliefs
- Humanism – man is the highest value in the universe

More Definitions

- Logic – the methods of valid thinking
    - Deductive logic – start with general principles accepted as true and apply them to specific cases -> the conclusion must be true
    - Inductive logic – study phenomena to determine a general principle -> leads to most likely or reasonable conclusion (core of the scientific method)
- Metaphysics – the study of being or reality
- Modernism – human reasoning replaced reliance on God
- Ontology – the study of being

Yet More Definitions

- Postmodernism – all meaning and truth is relative
- Presupposition – an assumption that is taken for granted
- Rationalism – determining all truth by logic
- Relativism – there are no absolutes
- Skeptic – one who doubts, questions, disagrees
- Theism – God created the world and is involved in the world

The Eras of Truth

- The objective foundation for truth, morals, meaning, purpose, and value:

    - **Premodernism** – truth is found in God

    - **Modernism** – truth is found in man, nature, reason, and science (humanism, naturalism, empiricism, evolution)

    - **Postmodernism** – truth does not exist (**Relativism**)

- **Post-normal science** where 1) facts are uncertain, 2) values in dispute, 3) stakes are high, and 4) decisions urgent

IT'S THE POST-TRUTH ERA.

FACTS

Arguments For God's Existence

- Cosmological argument
  - Beginning of the universe
- Teleological (Design) argument(s)
  - Design and order in the universe, e.g Anthropic Principle
  - Design of life
- Moral argument
  - Moral law implies a moral law giver
- Ontological argument
  - The concept of God – greatest conceivable and necessary Being

Cosmological Argument

- Premise – everything that had a beginning had a cause
    - Based on Law of Causality
    - Everything has a cause
- The universe had a beginning
    - Einstein's General Relativity
    - Second Law of Thermodynamics (Entropy)
- Therefore the universe had a cause
    - "Supernatural forces are at work …"

Characteristics of First Cause

- Self-existent, timeless, non-material
- Creator of time, space and matter
- Outside of time, space and matter
- Omnipresent – without limits
- Omnipotent – creator of the universe
- Omniscient – intelligent designer
- Personal – choose to convert "nothingness" into time-space-material universe

Teleological Argument

- Every design had a designer
  - A watch requires a watchmaker (Paley)
- The universe has highly complex design
  - Verified by the Anthropic Principle
  - Universe fine-tuned (designed) to make life possible on earth
- Therefore the universe had a Designer
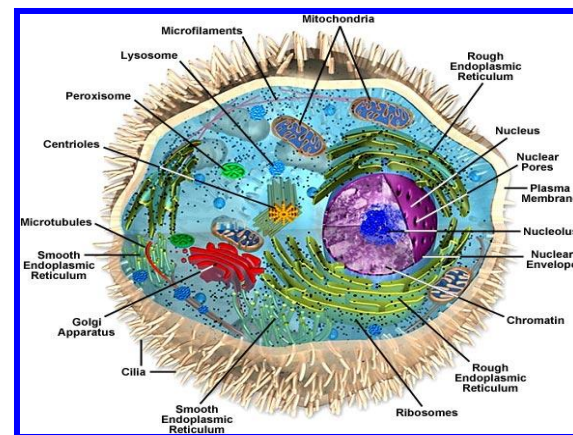 - Earth was designed for us

Anthropic Principle

- **122 very narrowly defined constants identified**
  - Oxygen level in earth's atmosphere ~21%
  - Gravity force is a precise constant
  - Expansion rate of universe
  - Jupiter orbit protects Earth
  - Thickness of Earth's crust controls release of oxygen
  - Rotation rate of Earth controls temperature differences
  - Tilt of earth at 23 degrees is just right
- **Probability of 1 chance in 10**138 (ZERO/NIL)**

Teleological Argument – Life

- Living organisms
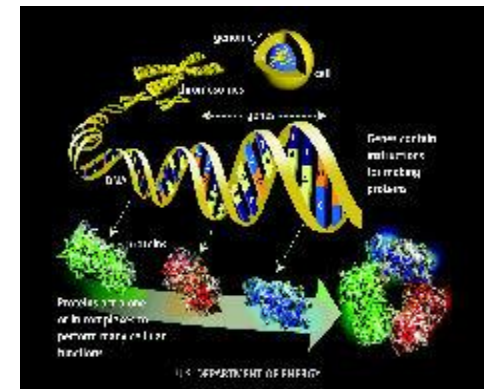 - Are complex
  - Appear designed
  - Contain information
- Life from non-life is impossible
  - Spontaneously generated life never observed
  - Probability is effectively ZERO
- Therefore life requires a Designer

Complexity of Life

- Life requires DNA (<u>information</u>)
- DNA contains instructions for building and replicating living things
- <u>Irreducible complexity</u>
  - All parts required to function
- <u>Specified complexity</u>
  - Order of amino acids is specified in proteins
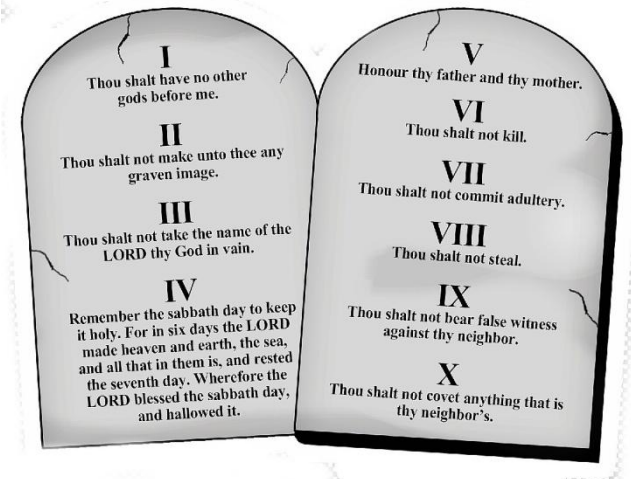 - Information in a "simple" amoeba requires 1000 complete sets of an encyclopedia

Moral Argument

- Every law has a law giver
  - Legislation requires a legislature
  - Prescription requires a prescriber
- There is a Moral Law
  - Fundamental sense of right and wrong
  - Conscience (manifestation of Moral Law)
  - Absolute (and universal) moral obligations
- Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver
  - Source higher than ourselves
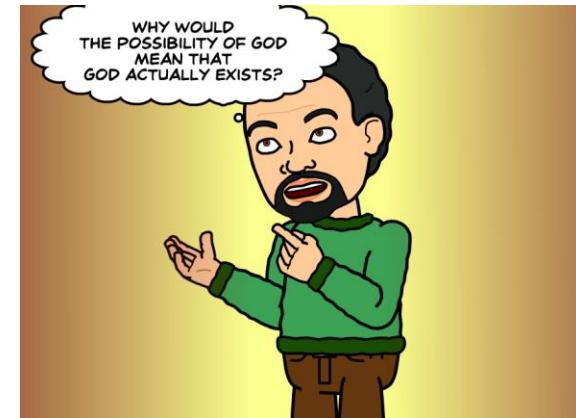 - Source of our human rights

Existence of The Moral Law

- The Moral Law is undeniable
- We know it by our reactions
- It is the basis of human rights
- It is the unchanging standard of justice
- Defines a real difference between moral positions
- We know what is absolutely wrong – there must be an absolute standard of righteousness
- It is the grounds for political & social dissent
- If there were no Moral Law, then we wouldn't make excuses for violating it

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Ontological Argument

- Ontology – concerned with the nature and relations of being
- Argues from the concept of God to His existence
- Does not begin with the facts of experience
  - Prior to and apart from experience
- Defines God as the greatest conceivable Being
  - A Being who has every possible perfection
- God, by definition, is a necessary Being
  - Cannot not exist
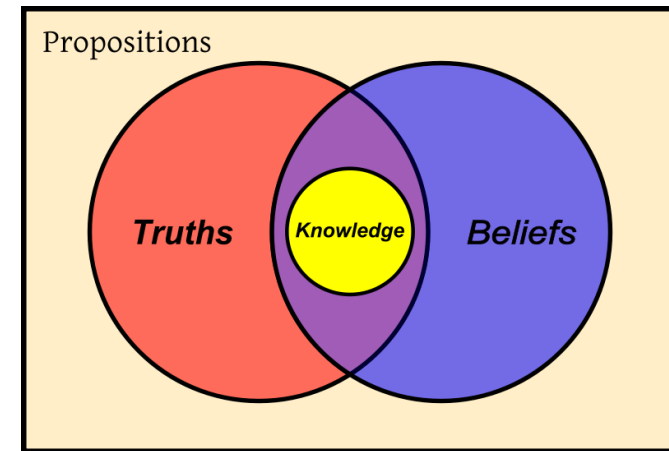- Not generally accepted argument

Essential Principles of Knowledge

- The law of non-contradiction
    - A cannot be **A** and **Non-A** at the same time and in the same sense or relationship
    - Truth cannot be contradictory
- The law of causality
    - Every effect must have a cause
- The basic reliability of sense perception
    - See, hear, touch, taste, smell
    - There are limits to our perception
    - Knowledge of external world impossible if our senses not basically dependable
- Ability of rational logic
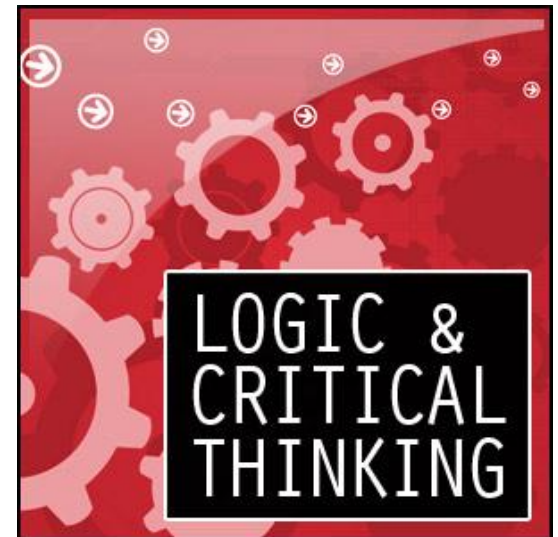
How Do We Determine Truth?

- Absolute or relative?

- Correspondent or coherent?

- Determining truth

  - Using our five senses?

  - Based on evidence?

  - Using rational logic?

  - Revealed in Scripture?

- Is truth knowable?

  - Agnosticism, skepticism, etc.

Propositions — Truths, Knowledge, Beliefs

CAN WE KNOW OBJECTIVE TRUTH?

Use of Logic in Apologetics

- The universe exists
- Universe cannot be infinitely old
  - Would have entered into state of disorder long ago
  - Universe is not in a state of disorder
  - Therefore not infinitely old
- Universe had a beginning
- Universe could not have brought itself into existence
- Something before the universe brought it into existence
- That something is God

Three Contrasting Views of Truth

- What does it mean for a statement to be true?

- Three different views on what truth is:
    1. Correspondence/Traditional view
    2. Relativism/Postmodern view
    3. Practical/Useful view

- The Test
    - Does your "Truth" match reality?
    - Does "what you believe to be true" match reality?

Correspondence/Traditional View

- Any statement is true if and only if it <u>corresponds</u> to or agrees with factual reality

- Declarative statements are subject to verification and falsification

- A statement can be proven false if it can be shown to disagree with objective reality

- Truth is not a matter of subjective opinion, or majority vote, or cultural fashion

- Truth is objective and knowable, e.g. photo from outer space showing the earth as a blue sphere

The Logic of a Law of Truth

- For any proposition P, at a given time, in a given respect, here is a law of logic:

  - Law of <u>non-contradiction</u>
    - <u>not (P and not-P)</u>
      - For any proposition P, it is not the case that both P is true and 'not-P' is true

- Law of non-contradiction (both P and 'not-P' are not true)

  - Can't both be true in the same way, at the same time
  - Both contradictory statements cannot be true
  - Can't be true that there both <u>is</u> and <u>is not</u> X in my room

Law of Non-Contradiction

- We live by the law of non-contradiction
- If I say XXX and my wife says not-XXX
    - One of us is wrong
    - We both can't be telling the truth
- Christians historically (traditionally) have affirmed the correspondence view of truth
    - Supports the concept of <u>absolute truth</u>
    - Logically self-consistent and supportable

Relativism/Postmodern View

- Statements about scientific facts, religious realities, or moral principles cannot be known to refer to objective states of affairs

- Language is contingently constructed through communities

- Language cannot transcend its own context and refer to realities outside itself

- All language fails to describe objective conditions because of its embeddedness in various cultures

- The truth of a statement depends on the views of persons or cultures, not on whether statements correspond to objective reality

An Example of Relativism

- For a statement to be true just means that a person or culture believes it to be true
    - "Well, if that's true for you …"
    - "We can't judge other cultures …"
- Accordingly, one can say "Jesus is Lord" and another "Allah is Lord", and both statements will be true – NOT

Putting the Statements to the Test

- This is illogical and fails the law of non-contradiction

- The statements are mutually exclusive
  - **John 1:14**, Christians believe that Jesus is "God made flesh"
  - Muslims deny that Allah can or did incarnate

- The two statements cannot both be objectively true

Summary of Relativism View

- Relativism offers no means of verifying or falsifying any belief
- Relativism does not support the concept of "absolute truth"
- This view is self-refuting and logically unsupportable
- This view often referred to as postmodernism

Conclusion on Relativism View

- Relativism is false
  - It does not correspond to reality
- When truth is deemed to depend on a person or culture holding the belief, anything can become "true"
  - Which is absurd
- This attitude/view cannot be applied to medicine or science
  - Would be deemed ridiculous

Practical/Useful View

- This view holds that a belief is true only if it works for a particular person
  - Christianity may be "true for me" if it helps me, but false for another person if it does not help him
- This view confuses usefulness with truth
  - e.g. "mismanaging money" <-> "misplacing money" (belief) <-> "stolen money" (reality) → results in diligent management of his money
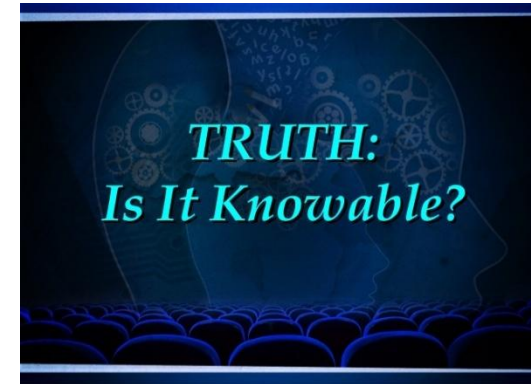
Truth v. Use Value

- The "truth value" of a belief is different that its "use value"

- Does not support the concept of "absolute truth"

- This view is self-refuting and logically unsupportable

Is Truth Knowable?

- Agnosticism – self-defeating, how do they know we can't know?

- Skepticism – self-defeating, do they even doubt skepticism?

- Rationalism – inconsistent – can't rationally prove that something is rationally inescapable

- Fideism – self-defeating, either unjustified belief or not fideism (belief <u>in</u> vs. belief <u>that</u>)

- Realism – we can know something

What is Truth?

- Truth is that which corresponds to reality
  - Thought applies to reality
  - Knowledge is possible
  - Logic is a necessary presupposition of all thought
  - It is undeniable that logic applies to reality
  - Self-evident principles cannot be denied
- Truth is <u>absolute</u>, <u>correspondent</u>, <u>knowable</u>, <u>logical</u>
- The Bible claims to be the Word of God & true
- Does the Bible correspond to reality?
  - Is the Bible true?

Truth is Truth
even if no one believes it
a LIE is a LIE
even if everyone believes it

Thank you for your attention!

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