

Block II Videos 9 through 15 (Religion)

Introduction: While this block addresses the most important questions concerning Christianity, the misrepresentation of mainstream Christian beliefs in particular (and religion in general) is quite extensive. As I said in **Block I**, I find it hard to believe that what is presented here is what Doctor Ruth Tallman originally wrote (especially for **video 12**). But regardless of why this is so, we are left with glaring problems that need to be addressed. And the most important is to properly understand what religion is, and how it applies to Philosophy.

We live in a culture where Christianity is so dominant that most people don't have any clue as to what other religions were like, so it is assumed that they must have been like Christianity. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Christianity is easily the most unique religion the world has ever seen, and not simply because it has one God instead of many. A very legitimate argument is that Christianity must be true because no human could have conceived any part of the Bible on his own. But I recognize that this is not very reassuring to the typical skeptic, especially one who doesn't even know what to look for. For him, he may say that the Bible has some incredible events happen, but pagan myths also have some incredible events happen, so what is the difference? Many of the proper answers to these kind of questions have nothing to do with this series, so I won't entertain them here. But there are four aspects that *are* important to philosophy and this series that I will address: personal characteristics of the gods, the gods' relationship with humans, the gods' role in the creation of the world, and morality. Furthermore, I will divide the "gods" into five categories: Jehovah, Allah, Brahma, pagan gods and dualist gods. For morality, I will include the atheist perspective as well.

It may seem like I am oversimplifying paganism here, but, as I will explain, with regards to the aspects being discussed, there is no meaningful difference between pagan pantheons. As the series progresses, specific attacks will be made on Jehovah periodically, and I will address them as they come up on a case-by-case basis. For the moment, it is my desire to show how wrong it is to assume all gods are the same.

A) Personal Characteristics of the Gods:

1) Jehovah: As identified in **video 12** (min 1:32), Jehovah is omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful), omnibenevolent (possessing perfect goodness), omnitemporal (existing at all times, **video 12** has this definition switched with omnipresent) and omnipresent (existing at all places). Except for the obvious typo in the video, I agree that these apply to Jehovah. Furthermore, by being omnipresent and omnitemporal, Jehovah is also omniscient. As I will soon show, however, that this does *not* apply to pagan gods. I also want to add a characteristic that is not mentioned but is critical as we progress through the series. Jehovah does not change. This has a big impact when considering Him also being omnitemporal and omnipresent. To exist *within* dimensions (time and space specifically) requires change to take place, as time and space are meaningless without change. He cannot *exist* in the world (or universe), yet he can be *present* in the world. This is much like a reader of a book is not part *of* the book, but does have full *awareness* of what is inside it.

2) Allah: All but one characteristic of Jehovah applies to Allah, and that is that Allah is apparently changeable to at least some degree (Quo-Ran 2:106). As I will talk about briefly in **Topic D.2**, Muslims place great faith in the original ancient Arabic writings and hold any translation of it as suspect. But the translation of verse 2:106 in a Quo-Ran given to me by an enthusiastic Muslim acquaintance says this: "If We ever abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We replace it with a better or similar one. Do you not know that God is Most Capable of everything?" This same friend of mine tells me

that he has a series of twenty books intended to help one understand the Quo-Ran, but that it is only 1/10 the volume of what scholars use. Yet this series of his has 76 pages of explanatory text for this one verse. This is consistent with my claim in **Topic B.2** that the relationship between Allah and man is one of a judge/accused.

Compare this to the Jewish and Christian ideas of Jehovah. We certainly see some changes in ideas as the Bible progresses. The Book of Deuteronomy adds many stipulations to the simpler laws first seen in Exodus. In the Book of Joshua, Jehovah relents on what may not be taken as spoils of war when attacking a city. But the most radical changes come in the New Testament, when we are told to go beyond the physical and to search our thoughts. Adultery is no longer a just physical act, but the lustful desire of anyone. Killing is no longer about drawing blood, but includes gossip. In my first example, Jehovah relented because it was impossible for the Israelites to follow the laws. In the second set of examples, the standard was raised. But in neither case are the old laws removed and/or forgotten (which is what abrogation means). We can at least interpret the Old Testament changes as a sign of how humans are unable to live up to God's expectations, and we can see in the New Testament just how lofty these expectations really are. Both observations are consistent with the father/child relationship I claim Jehovah has with man in **Topic B.1**.

3) Brahma: The "supreme god" of Hinduism. I feel he deserves to be separated from the other Hindu gods that will be addressed generically as "pagan." Exactly who Brahma is varies greatly in Hinduism, from being something roughly similar to Jehovah, to a powerful but otherwise typical pagan deity. For this paper, I will assume we are considering his most powerful form. He is a being who was born in an egg he created, and then gave of himself to create the universe. To look at him as the supernatural equivalent of the Primordial Egg of early Big Bang Theories is a good analogy. As the universe *is* Brahma, we see he must be omnipotent, omnitemporal (although we don't know if his consciousness is linear like ours or not) and omnipresent. Depending if his consciousness is linear or not, he may or may not be omniscient. In the sense that Brahma gave all to everything and can get nothing back that was not already his, we can even call him omnibenevolent. But because the universe is of him, he *is* the framework of time and space; therefore he must be able to change.

4) Pagan Gods: While there is no doubt that pagan gods are universally more powerful than humans, any claim to being any of the "omnis" fall flat with even the most rudimentary review. For a typical example of a king god (who is presumably the most powerful of the pantheon), let's look at Zeus. Why must he seek the Fates if he is omniscient? How can he be omnipotent if he fears humans having fire? How can he be omnibenevolent (at least in the sense of being complete in and of himself) or omnitemporal if he was born of a titan? Why must he *travel* from Olympus to meet mortals (usually women who catch his eye) if he is omnipresent? And the fickleness and pettiness of pagan gods as a whole is so prevalent in myth that they most certainly can be described as changeable.

5) Dualist Gods: While many forms of this take place, we see most of the "omnis" fall apart by the very nature of the Dualist theology. Dualism believes that there are two forces (whether identified as actual gods or not) of equal but opposite power. One might say that *together* they could be omniscient, omnipotent and (such as the Roman god Janus) non-changing, but not as individuals. Dualists either reject the idea of omnibenevolence (in any sense) or only associate one of the pair as being so. Omnitemporalness and omnipresence are the only characteristics that might be associated with them, but this would depend on the culture they came from.

B) The God's Relationship with Humans:

1) Jehovah: Jehovah, of course, certainly has a creator-creation relationship with humans. But, by being creations, we were therefore made with a purpose. And this purpose is to ultimately establish a father-child relationship with Him. If I could only use one sentence to summarize what the Christian faith is about, I would propose something like: To learn of the mystery of God's plan of salvation and to join Him in perfection. The love He has for us is that of agape (or charity, **Topic VIII.A.4**): loving the unlovable.

2) Allah: With regards to the creation, Allah and Jehovah are the same. But since Islam denies the divinity of Jesus, our purpose is not the same. While I am not an apologist of Islam, and I am certain there is much debate within Islamic circles on this matter, it appears to me that the relationship is similar to a king or lord with his knights, with rewards given to the faithful at a great banquet. In this respect, we can see the love of storge, or affection (**Topic VIII.A.2**). One can also describe the relationship as a judge with the accused, although Allah is given to mercy and therefore charity can be seen.

3) Brahma: If I may briefly refer to his omnibenevolence (**Topic A.3**), it appears his relationship with humans is of the detached type, with little or no interest in what he created (deism). This might explain why this version of him has so few followers and why he is frequently described as a more typical pagan deity. I can see no place for any of the four loves (**Topic VIII.A**) here.

4) Pagan Gods: There is, to be truthful, much variation in *how* pagan gods treat humans. Some are more benign than others. But in almost all cases, it is still a master-slave relationship whether beneficial to humans or not. Any boons humans are given from the gods are designed to make humans better servants. The extremely few exceptions to this rule (most of which are Native North American) still have the gods look at humans as pets or curiosities; genuine affection might be there (storge), but it is still for the ultimate benefit of the god. We also see many examples of intense, sexual inspired eros (**Topic VIII.A.3**), but only rarely (and even then, mostly in contemporary retelling of the tales) is there any indication that the mortal consented to the advances. Indeed, we find many stories of mortals being cursed for refusing advances of the gods.

5) Dualist Gods: This is indeed hard to classify, but I would suggest indifference would be accurate. The very nature of dualism suggests that, in order for a balance to be maintained, humans must partake equally in both domains. Even if such gods became "jealous" of their partner, they would be helpless to do anything about it as the other god is equally powerful.

C) The God's Role in the Creation of the World:

1) Jehovah: I would like to simply say that Jehovah created the universe, but that is too simplistic. He not only created the universe as we know it, but He created the matter and energy that the universe is composed of. In doing so, He also created time and space. As the creator of all dimensions, He must therefore transcend reality as we experience it. Without time, He could not, nor need not, be created Himself. He always existed. He is the "ultimate causation" spoken of in **video 10**. Jehovah created the universe and, while doing so, created time for our perspective. But for Jehovah, all moments are the same moment, so the universe has yet to be made, exists and has ended all at once to Him.

2) Allah: With respect to the creation itself, Allah is the same as Jehovah.

3) Brahma: Brahma created the universe, but he created it out of himself. Also, take note of

what I say next concerning the Shadow God.

4) Pagan Gods: No pagan religion truly explains creation. Most gods were born of other gods, and so were created themselves. Even the gods of creation that are mentioned invariably came from someplace else to create this world. This means this universe is just an extension of a bigger reality, much like one might add a new room to an existing house. This isn't to say that the pagans didn't see this problem themselves, as there is lots of evidence that they recognized some power they simply didn't know anything about. Greeks had the "Unknown God," Native Americans had "the Great Spirit," etc. I call these "Shadow Gods." Almost every culture in the world had their own version of one. Brahma, as originally understood, is basically a Shadow God with a proper name instead of a title. But having a name came at a cost, as he devolved into a more mundane god over time while the Shadow Gods of other cultures remained too mysterious to touch.

5) Dualist Gods: There are many variations of dualism, so I don't want to simply say that they don't answer this question. In some cases, some other force created the universe. In some other cases, the universe always was. In any case, like with their relationship with humans (**Topic B.5**), it is of secondary importance.

D) Morality: To be clear, I define "morality" as the means to define "good" and "evil," and I define "ethics" as behavior based on these morals. Put another way, morality is what should be done, ethics are how it is done. Nothing presented in this series is in conflict with this point of view.

1) Jehovah: There are four expressions of morality that Christianity teaches: Eternal Law (God's plan), Natural Moral Law (discussed in **video 34**), Revealed Law (called Divine Command Theory in **video 33**, although very poorly explained) and Civil and Ecclesiastical Law (to promote the common good). As I hinted at above (**Topic B.1**), the Eternal Law is to bring us to Him. The other three are means to this end. Ethics based on the four laws are to be understood in the context of the seven virtues (**Topic VII.A**). We will spend an entire block on morality (**Block VII**), so I will leave these details alone here. But the most radical change to morality that Christianity brought was a shift of emphasis from the self to others.

2) Allah: This is difficult to summarize because it is such a broad topic. There have been Muslim kingdoms who did a far better job following the spirit of the teachings of Jesus than most Christian kingdoms. There are Muslim rulers who would have disgusted many pagan kings mentioned in the Old Testament with their excesses. The overwhelming majority are somewhere in between. The problem is, all these different attitudes are supported by both the Quo-Ran and by the life of Mohammad (as told in the traditions called the Hadith). And this is not a matter of interpreting a verse or a legend the wrong way, as valor and atrocity are both explicitly present. It is a matter of deciding which verses and legends are to be followed (the legacy of abrogation in **Topic A.2**). This, coupled with the fact that Muslims rely on text written in the Arabic of the time of Mohammad instead of translations to the vernacular, means the common Muslim must rely on scholars to interpret their beliefs instead of discovering it for themselves. The internet today is changing that dynamic, but the tradition of going to the ancient language is still strong.

In contrast, no one can justify the infamous Spanish Inquisition or the heinous pedophile scandals from the 1980s by reading the New Testament or the Catechism. And while translations of the Bible and the Catechism may have minor flaws, the heinous nature of these crimes is blatantly obvious to any who choose to read them.

I say this, not to distract the gentle reader from the video series, but to explain my very bold claim. Islam has the characteristics of an evolutionist moral system (**Topic D.6**). Mohammad and his immediate successors lived their lives doing whatever it took to get their message out and to ensure this message would survive at all costs. This is seen in the Hadiths, the Quo-Ran and the legends/histories during the first 150 years of Islam itself. This is why Islam has such an extreme range of ethical behaviors.

3) Brahma: As Brahma has no interaction with humans, humans learn nothing of morality from him, as least as Westerners look at morality. For those who do embrace Brahma, they believe that the universe will eventually collapse back on Brahma (the supernatural equivalent of the Big Crunch Theory), so it is better to join him sooner than later. This version of morality concerns itself with what one should do for one's own benefit as opposed to others. While this does not preclude doing "good deeds," such actions are only important in how they benefit the self.

4) Pagan Gods: There is really no morality from the pagan gods that would be recognizable to most modern readers. Humans are subordinate to the gods; therefore, pagan morality was based on what would ultimately serve the greater good of the gods. If humans happened to also benefit from their dictates, then that was a bonus. All the pagan myths from around the world ultimately come down to the advice of "Don't make the gods angry." Even the cultures that had rewards and punishments in the after world (Hades for Greeks, Valhalla or Niflheim for Norse, Happy Hunting Grounds for Native Americans, etc.), Morality was not based so much on how to treat others, but rather how to properly glorify oneself.

5) Dualist Gods: As balance is the ultimate goal of dualism, we find the concept of Western morality on shaky ground at best. Any action done to the glory of one god must be answered by an equal action for the glory of the other god. Ultimately, while dualism does a decent job explaining why there is both unpleasantness and pleasantness in the world (indeed, C.S. Lewis thought that dualism was the "manliest" alternative to Christianity), it falls apart rather rapidly if any serious scrutiny is applied in trying to find a moral code. In the myths of dualism, the champions of one god must allow the champions of the other relatively free reign, unless the overall balance is disturbed.

6) Atheism: I think the single greatest false assumption about morality is that, had the Catholic Church not come along, we would still view "good" and "evil" the same as we do now. Most of the Fathers of Atheism certainly thought so, at least up to the time of Friedrich Nietzsche. As I stated in **Topic I.B.3**, the Fathers of Atheism originally thought morality was evolutionary, although there were some like David Hume (**Topic F.3.v**) who denied morality altogether with their deterministic ideas (**Block V**). We see the deterministic view dominating nihilism and existentialism views (**video 16**). For contemporary atheists, we seem to have a loose collection of ideas that I call "patriarchism." What all patriarchs seem to have in common is a single person who first claims the role of the god they deny exists, and then defining morality as however they see fit. Their inspirations generally seem to come from "cherry-picking" what they want from determinism, evolutionism and Christianity, with little thought as to how it could actually work.

I would love to have created a single and coherent discussion on this topic, but if I am to follow the framework of the series, this is impossible. In **video 13**, I will discuss what evil is, and in **Topic F.5.ii** I will talk about what it means for one to be consistent with the moral basis one claims to have. But for now, let me give a quick overview of these non-theistic ideas of morality.

If one denies the supernatural, then the only authorities possible to create a moral code are

either nature or man. Nature is in constant and violent change, and merciless to those unable to cope with the changes. As both deterministic (**Block V**) and evolutionary philosophers agree, "good" and "evil" do not exist, but they differ on why this is so. For the determinist, such concepts are illusionary because we can't help but act as we do. For the evolutionist, "good" is just another name for whatever helps a species survive in the hostile universe, while "evil" is whatever hinders such survival (a concept better described by the words "bad" or "detrimental").

The patriarchs, however, are generally quite difficult to pin down with specifics. They tend to focus on a specific goal (such as Peter Singer defending animal rights in **video 42**) and either ignore or overlook the parts of their morality that society at large might find repulsive (Singer is in favor of bestiality as long as neither the human nor the animal is "hurt" during sex, although this opinion is absent in the video). In this sense, most of the patriarchs are deceitful as they use Christian ideas (especially compassion) and pervert them in ways completely incompatible to the Christian way of thought (as Singer did with animal rights). But as long as they do not claim "honesty" as a virtue (as do Christians), they have no ethical prohibition against being deceitful in their teachings. In my humble opinion, Christians need to start listening when an atheist claims Christians are assuming their morals are the same as theirs. The differences can be quite profound, and many influential patriarchs are using Christian ignorance for their own ends.

E) Big Bang: There is a danger when using science to support theological ideas, and that is because science is constantly changing. Naturally, Christians want to incorporate scientific discoveries to make the faith stronger, as Jehovah is a God of truth. I will give credit where credit is due: Hank never accuses Christians of constantly changing their minds on God with every new scientific discovery. Unfortunately, a great many do. This is simple hypocrisy, as core Christian beliefs have remained unchanged for two millennia. Only our understanding of what some of these beliefs might mean has changed. This is important because, although the Big Bang Theory is still the most popular scientific explanation for our reality, there are other theories.

The original Big Bang Theory suggested a singular point from which energy and sub-atomic particles burst out to create the universe. There were various stages as matter and anti-matter annihilated each other, with the more numerous particles of matter winning out. Then the surviving particles formed hydrogen atoms, and all the while the universe had an incredibly high density of energy. As the hydrogen spread out and the limits of the universe grew, the energy spread out and the universe rapidly cooled. From there, clouds of hydrogen collapsed on themselves to form stars. In the stars, heavier atoms formed and then were spread about the universe when the star exploded, seeding other hydrogen clouds. These clouds, if possessing the right concentration of the different heavier atoms, provided the theoretical possibility of producing life on any planets that might come along in the new star system.

Most of the alternative ideas of Big Bang deny that the universe came from a single point, and they do have evidence that supports those theories. But while the origin of Big Bang has changed, what happened once the universe was even a few milliseconds old follows the same story line. And this is to be expected, as the higher math used for these models is not exact like simple arithmetic. Instead, it approximates answers with an incredibly small degree of error. For nearly all applications, the error in this approximation is so small as to be effectively non-existent. But when one wants to look at time when time is absolutely zero, this error becomes infinitely large. We are literally dividing 1 by 0. This problem is nothing new. Ancient Greeks loved to create mathematical paradoxes with this reality, and George Berkeley explicitly used Idealism (**video 6**) as his answer to such paradoxes.

Many radical alternative theories for the Big Bang have been quickly discarded, and even those which hung on have few proponents. Very few challenge anything from Big Bang that I concern myself with, and those that do challenge my points are easily addressed. It would be beyond the scope of this work to address even the most popular alternative theories, so I will continue to use the Big Bang Theory as the standard for what "science" says about the creation of our universe.

F) Video Block II (Religion): In this block, what we see is a gross misrepresentation of just who Jehovah is, and what Christianity is about. I have already laid a lot of groundwork to address this problem. Simply showing how not all religions are the same actually does a lot to show the flaws in these seven videos.

1) Video 9 (Anselm & the Argument for God):

i) Opening Remarks: I agree that theology must always involve a deity while philosophy can explore questions without a deity. But theology is a subset of philosophy. Philosophy looks in *all* directions, which includes theology. Hank agrees to this at min 0:44, but he is not consistent with this as we go on. He always returns to the position that philosophy is to atheism what theology is to theism. Compare "If you're a theist, now is the time to offer some justification for your religious beliefs" with "And if you're an atheist, it's time for you to pay attention too." Why do theists have to prove their point while atheists only have to watch? This may seem like I'm nit-picking on a seemingly innocent choice of words, but this pattern continues again and again throughout the series. In **video 14**, I will quote atheist Christopher Hitchens where he explicitly states that this is exactly what he is doing. His followers even have a name for themselves: agnostic-atheists.

Furthermore, Hank claims that faith is fundamentally unprovable, and therefore not valuable to philosophy (min 1:03). I strongly disagree, and I always fall back to Descartes (**video 5**), where we learned that it is impossible to have a meaningful understanding of truth without at least one assumption. He also contradicts his own claim in **video 3**, where he admitted that deductive reasoning is limited in scope because there are very few things we can know with absolute certainty. Don't forget, the series just dedicated an entire video discussing how elusive knowledge really is (**video 7**). But of most concern to me is what was talked about in the prior video, where Hank actually defines "proof" as what separates science from philosophy!

ii) What Philosophy Is Not: The proper terminology in philosophy that Hank was warning us against during the introduction is called "bad faith," and this term is poorly explained in **video 16**. Personally, I like to call it "immature faith;" as all faith begins with one being taught it by someone else. It is immature because one is accepting someone else's beliefs at face value. For it to mature, one must examine, challenge, and compare it to other ideas and faiths. As theism is presented in the series as being something that needs to be "proven" while non-theists need not prove anything, we will see many "straw man" arguments (like JTB in **video 7**) designed to present evidence that is easily contradicted or reduced to absurdity as a means to discredit Christianity. That being said, I agree that theology is not for the atheist. But the atheist is still not off the hook, as he must still answer many of the same questions theology does: Why do we exist, what is morality, and what is ethical behavior? When we get to **video 13**, I will speak at length of what these things mean outside of theology.

I do want to partially challenge the claim that we cannot use the Bible to defend Christianity. I agree that one cannot use the Bible to prove to someone that they need to follow it, and for the same reason Hank gave us (min 2:01). However, when one attempts to disprove Jehovah (such as with the gardner example), then what the Bible says about Jehovah is both appropriate and necessary. To do

otherwise is a common straw man technique: redefining Jewish and Christian ideas of Jehovah to suit one's own opinions. We will see this a lot in the series.

iii) Saint Anselm: I will accept that Saint Anselm's arguments are rather weak here. But then again, so were the counter-arguments. Tropical islands with snow-covered mountains do exist (although rare), a fact overlooked in the video. I think the follow-up with Immanuel Kant, however, was accurate and appropriate.

One must also remember that Saint Anselm really had no interlocutors with whom to test his theories on. Gaulino's counter-argument was no better than Anselm's argument, and I believe it actually backfired on Gaulino. Saint Anselm made his assertion about 700 years before the Fathers of Atheism and 500 years before the Protestant Reformation. He was speaking to a people who basically accepted the supernatural and were more interested in what Jehovah was like as opposed to whether or not He existed. If Saint Anselm's argument is weak, it is because he was "breaking new ground." I take the position that Saint Anselm actually was a pioneer opening the way for serious talk about the existence of God, and therefore should not be expected to be the final word.

iv) The Gardner: What we have here is an example of person A claiming Intelligent Design (which we will talk about in **video 11**) and person B trying to disprove this theory with scientific falsifiability (**video 8**). I will show just how much this gardner example actually supports Jehovah when we get to **video 11**, but for now I want to demonstrate the fallacy of person B's counter-argument.

Firstly, it is a straw man's Jehovah into what the interlocutor wants Jehovah to be. This is a case where we *can* use the Bible in philosophy. It is the equivalent of an accused man admitting under oath things the prosecution otherwise would not be allowed to enter into evidence. If person B wants to specifically discredit Jehovah, then he must discredit what Jehovah is believed to be, not some other notion of this belief. It is acceptable to bring the Bible into the discussion here because the non-Christian has allowed it.

Secondly, when it comes to unprovable theories of scientific interest, such as what caused the Big Bang, science is also reduced to the gardener problem as well. If an atheist claims the garden example is a valid way to discredit Anselm's idea, then the theist can claim the garden example as a valid way to shut down the infinite regress idea (this is important to remember in the next video).

2) Video 10 (Aquinas & the Cosmological Arguments): With Saint Aquinas, we see some real solid and rational explanations for theism. We will see him again when we talk in depth about morality (**video 34**). Despite all that Hank said here, the only counter-argument that was legitimate (but still far from convincing) was infinite regress. The others were mere distraction, which I'll address individually.

i) Value: In **Topic I.A.2**, I spoke of how extreme rationalism had led to nihilism and its denial of value. While this is never explained by the series, we do see it in action. In **video 16**, we see the existentialists embracing the absurd, which is defined as finding meaning in a meaningless world. In **video 18**, we will struggle to understand if stealing money only to replace it afterwards is really stealing. In **Block VI (Language and Imagination)**, we will revisit the importance of value for a time, but before it is over, the block will return to impotency when it can't decide if Marco Everistti's stunt was art or not (**video 31**). And the final horrors in **Block VIII (Ethics)** are, in no small part, due to being unable to find value in anything, and therefore having to rely on absolute equality in the context

of "interchangeability." It is only with the divine that value has any meaning.

ii) Which God?: Hank is absolutely right about these arguments not directly pointing to Jehovah. But, one cannot discredit a theory on grounds that it fails to explain something it never was intended to explain. These proofs were not meant to explain what the Creator God was like, only that he existed. Why Jehovah seems like the most likely candidate for this god is actually very easy to make, and many clues were already addressed in **Topics II.A-II.D**. But despite these snide remarks, the series never really makes an effort to understand why the Christians might have it right. I will not formally address this matter here, but we do see some more evidence of why Christianity can be right in the next video and in **Block VI (video 29)** in particular).

iii) A Sentient God?: Just like with "Which God?" above, Cosmological Arguments certainly do not address this matter. And, just like before, the fact it doesn't explain something it never intended to does not discredit it. What bothers me most is that Hank knows this, as he admits this in **video 12**.

iv) Infinite Regress vs. Ultimate Causation: To be skeptical of ultimate causation became obsolete with the end of the era of the Fathers of Atheism (**Topic I.B.3**), because the Big Bang Theory shows an ultimate cause of the universe. I'm not saying infinite regress is a dead matter, only that it is not, *de facto*, a credible argument against ultimate causation. This universe had a definite cause that is incapable of being understood by science. Science is simply forced to accept that there is something beyond this universe. They do not have to accept Jehovah or any other deity, but they have to accept that something exists that they can never understand with certainty. To do otherwise would be to doubt their own discoveries.

v) Does Saint Aquinas Defeat Himself?: This is an example of Hank begging the question (last video), because he is assuming that if one uncaused cause exists, then that is proof that there must be more. He appears to be trying to force infinite regress back into ultimate causation, but infinite regress is only possible in time and space (it requires change), and we have no degree of certainty concerning what is beyond the Big Bang. This is not the end of the infinite regress vs. ultimate causation debate; we will see it again in Free Will vs. Determinism (**Block V**) and Language and Imagination (**Block VI**). It will also be an important consideration in several other individual videos as well.

vi) Parting Shots: At min 8:55, Hank makes a claim that "If you disagree with an argument, you don't just get to say "yeah, you're wrong"". Remember this when he pushes socialist ideas in **Block VIII**, with weak or no counter-arguments given. For **video 42**, in particular, he makes an emotional appeal, and what little rational thought is given there is quite inconsistent with other ideas he supports (particularly in **video 45**).

Finally, his comment that God is important "particularly in the lives of theists" (min 9:32) gives an extremely dangerous suggestion that God is not as important in the lives of agnostics and atheists. As I will show in **video 13**, as well as **Blocks VII and VIII**, the existence or non-existence of God is absolutely critical in how we live. If one does not want to live in a world with Jehovah, then one should prepare for such a life; especially if believing in Jehovah is considered "dangerous" as plainly stated in **videos 14 and 15**.

3) Video 11 (Intelligent Design): This is the most educational video of this Block. We see what is perhaps the best demonstration this series has of the Socratic Method, with arguments and

counter-arguments going back and forth, and with both weak and strong arguments made for each side. Also, we see the argument from analogy used, which was barely hinted at in **video 2**. Even so, we still see a clear bias towards atheism here. While I don't fault Hank for that *per se*, I do hold him, as a scientist and educator, accountable for being very selective in what science he chooses to present. I find this contrary to his often stated goal of giving us the tools we need to make our own decisions. In short, this is an excellent video on how rational arguments *should* develop, but one must be aware of the bias present when arguing with oneself.

i) Evolution: I agree that, in classical materialism (**Topic I.B.3**), when we assume that matter is constantly "stirred up," and especially if an infinite amount of matter is also assumed to exist, that intelligent design is basically "wishful thinking." Any combination, no matter how unlikely, will eventually happen. But even at this point, we have no real reason given as to why matter is in motion, or how it can remain in eternal motion without either collapsing in on itself (the Big Crunch) or "thinning out" infinitely (the Big Rip). This is a legitimate challenge to the assumption that matter is constantly "stirred up." Therefore we do not need to consider intelligent design as "wishful thinking."

Furthermore, the Big Bang Theory destroyed the idea of this type of universe. There is a finite amount of matter and, more importantly, a finite amount of time for all the wonders we see to have happened. Science also believes that the universe is not stable. There are multiple theories about how the universe will end, but this work is not about that. Cosmologists are actually admitting that intelligent design is becoming harder and harder to disagree with as they learn more and more about how the universe came to be, and how it organized itself (Do Black Holes Create Universes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFgpKlcpzNM&t=486s>). The likelihood of this universe developing by chance is so small that it exceeds understanding. Take this "simple" example:

To begin with, if the balance between mass and energy from the Big Bang had been even slightly different in ratio, then our universe would have either quickly collapsed in on itself (Big Crunch) or spread out shotgun pattern to infinity (Big Rip). We then have the fact that a star system like ours, with the right type and number of suns (it is believed that having more than one sun would create impossible conditions for life to exist on a planet) and with planets the right distance from the star, is statistically quite rare. But of everything I talk about here, this is the only one that has any claim to being rationally "possible" when considering the size and age of the universe. From here, the probabilities simply go insanely close to being impossible for even the simplest organism we know of to have emerged.

The species with the smallest DNA chain known to science is the Grapevine Yellow Speckle Viroid with 220 base pairs of DNA (researchgate.net, submitted by Ali Karami). Consider that the human DNA has about three *billion* pairs. But for the molecules to randomly combine for just one strand of 220 pairings in ideal conditions is as likely as one winning the jackpot of the South Carolina Powerball 16 times in a row while only buying one ticket each time! And since life evolved on Earth almost as soon as it was theoretically possible, one's winning streak needs to start with the very next lottery result. And even then, we don't have a cell. The complex proteins necessary to form the rest of the cell must spontaneously come together with the DNA while competing for many of the same atoms that go into the DNA. The conditions necessary for all the right molecules to simultaneously develop and converge at the same place at the same time is simply incalculable.

And let's not forget the problem of generating the necessary atoms in the first place, as the Big Bang only produced hydrogen. It is in the stars that heavier atoms form, and stars can only seed other systems with heavy atoms when they explode and send the atoms into other gas clouds. When one

considers how long it takes a star to form, die and explode, and the time for the debris to reach other gas clouds in proper quantities, we see that life on Earth must have started as soon as theoretically possible.

If this example is too difficult to comprehend how life can exist by random chance, consider that I am trying to give the most idealized, best case scenario for the simplest form of life known to man to exist. For a much more detailed description as to how unlikely Random Chance can account for life, see *Answering the New Atheism* by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, or *The Case for the Creator* by Lee Strobel.

Efforts to maintain the randomness necessary for random chance have theorists looking beyond the Big Bang, suggesting that this universe itself evolved out of a previous universe, which likewise came from another universe. In other words, they seek to bring back infinite regress. This is because they believe that the possibility for life to exist is so infinitesimally small that it could only have happened with an infinite amount of chances. I can't say there is no merit to this, but I want to emphasize this *very* critical fact: such speculation is no longer science because there is no falsifiability. Efforts to use science to disprove Jehovah on the creation of the universe have failed and now science is turning into its own religion by worshiping unprovable math.

ii) Arguments from Analogy: Deists often describe the creator as a watchmaker, who makes the watch but then has nothing more to do with it as the watch now runs itself. But more importantly, this watch also points out just how unlikely random chance is. Random chance, which Hank specifically claims can answer everything (min 5:50), implies that it *is* possible to find such a watch, one not made by intelligent design, but rather from a random arrangement of molecules. I think one should keep this in mind when when we get to the disanalogies presented by Hank.

iii) Straw Man Disanalogies: While the method of presenting how to use a disanalogy is properly done, several disanalogies here are straw men. Hank does present better ones about half way through the video, but the first few were simply twisting the facts so he could make a *reductio ad absurdum* claim (**video 2**).

a) Lack-of-Purpose: The lack-of-purpose argument assumes that there is absolutely no purpose. But just because we cannot figure out something's purpose now does not necessarily mean it has no purpose. Until just recently, science thought the human appendix served no purpose, but current studies now show it somehow boosts our immune system. To make matters worse, this line of reasoning is taken to an absurd degree, essentially ignoring the fact that some things are simply by-products of something that *is* useful. When I buy a plastic model kit, there is always some "flash" where the plastic resin seeped in between the two presses. This flash is a by-product of the model-making process, and it does not discredit the idea that the plastic model itself has a purpose, nor does it suggest that the model itself was created by random chance.

b) Assigning Purpose Where None Was: I do agree that we can assume purpose where no purpose was originally intended; such is the nature of scientific discovery. But to simply accept an idea without further examination is where the problem comes in. To compare this to purposing Hank's finger (I can't believe he was that vulgar here) to picking his nose is *reductio ad absurdum*, and it was his own argument! The fallacy here was the conclusion that the finger's *only* purpose was to pick his nose. Further examination will reveal that picking one's nose is just one of several things the finger seems good for, so we can eventually arrive to the logical conclusion that the purpose of fingers is to allow man, through his free will (**video 24**), to manipulate his environment (and

thus create a new chain through an uncaused cause(**video 10**). Of course, to come up with possibilities of something's use is indicative of imagination (**Block VI**), my favorite argument for Jehovah.

c) Re-purposing Purposes: Bertrand Russell did make a slightly better argument here, but it was still a straw man argument. I will not doubt that the tails of bunnies evolved the way they did for some purpose. The fact that this purpose had the undesirable side affect of making the bunny a better target when man created accurate guns does not discredit the original purpose of the tail being as it was. Actually, for man to so re-purpose things is another strong piece of evidence to support imagination (**Block VI**), and therefore free will (**Block V**).

iv) Natural Selection: As I hope I made clear, evolution would be a good counter-argument against intelligent design if certain assumptions about this universe were true, but science has not only discredited these assumptions (**Topic F.3.i**), but also found evolution alone to be inconceivably unlikely. "...but now we have a perfectly good scientific explanation for how the complexity of the world came about" (min 5:50) is an example of looking at one thing in isolation, and not fitting it into the bigger picture.

Richard Swinburne (min 7:02) was given a chance to defend intelligent design in the video, although not to the degree I did above. The problem with his argument was in only looking at the Earth, as opposed to the universe as a whole. Without explaining how unlikely everything is at the universal level, I fear that those watching this video will likely say, "There must be enough systems in the universe for things to be just right, and Earth just happens to be it." The counter claim at min 8:00 about a "sample set of one" goes in this direction. It is a theoretically valid counter-argument, but fails at the practical level because the odds of life existing at all are so impossibly small. If we sent out a million probes that could travel at the speed of light to explore one system after another, the universe would likely end before any other life could be found, assuming that there is life to be found at all. Actually, finding life would be as close to "proof" of a Creator God as we could possibly get, as the odds of doing so in a purely random universe would be virtually impossible. On the other hand, not finding life would prove nothing. The fallacy here is attempting to apply falsifiability (which is science, **video 8**) criteria to a philosophical discussion.

v) David Hume: This argument is better understood in the context of why is there evil in the world (**video 13**), and I will talk more about the argument there. But for now, consider this: I already admitted that this universe is dying, so everything in it must likewise die (**Topic F.3.i**). The Christian short answer as to why an all-good God would allow the universe to die is that He didn't, it was man who is causing its death. This belief goes back at least 3,400 years when Moses wrote the third chapter of Genesis.

Now, one may ask how could man, through his evilness, cause the eventual destruction of the world, much less the universe? All I can say is that arguably the biggest, most persistent and most influential worldwide movement in the last century is the environmental movement, and the fundamental belief of this movement is that man is destroying the Earth. I will admit that there is a large leap between what man does to destroy the Earth and what man might do to destroy the universe, but there is at least consistent logic to this if one believes man has the power to drastically change his environment.

vi) Extreme Rationalism: We see just how extreme Rationalism is blinding Hank to what evidence we have. If a primitive man walked through the jungle and saw a watch for the first time, he may not know who made it or what it was for, but he certainly would not mistake it as being a

creation of nature. Furthermore, contemporary science (especially cosmology) is finding it harder and harder to explain the universe without intelligent design. It takes stronger faith to believe the universe could exist as it does through random chance than to believe in Jehovah as creator. This is certainly not proof as demanded by deductive reasoning (**video 2**), but is a logical conclusion using inductive reasoning (**video 3**). Actually, when one considers how many other theories have come and gone while the Jehovah theory remains, we really should consider abductive reasoning (again, **video 3**) by now.

4) Video 12 (What Is God Like?): I already touched on all the attributes commonly associated with Jehovah in **Topic A.1**, and won't repeat them here. Yes, every one of the attributes Hank associates with Jehovah in this video *is* Biblical, plus the "unchanging" characteristic he left out.

For me to sum this video up in a nutshell, all I have to do is show just how far-removed extreme rationalism is from empiricism. We see all the "problems" mentioned in the video flying in the face of common, everyday experiences.

i) The Duck Test: There is an old saying that, if it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it must be a duck. Now, I'm sure some zoologist somewhere will disagree with this, and present some species of animal that meets this criteria and yet will not be called a duck for one reason or another. And his reasons for doing so are quite likely to be very good. But they will also be for reasons most people have no concern about. I believe there is more danger in not using the Duck Test, and therefore denying knowledge of anything, than in being occasionally wrong. Also, for someone to prove the Duck Test is false, they have to provide evidence that the criteria concerned is not sufficient or was misleading. In other words, they have to explain *why* a particular animal may be duck-like, but is not really a duck. I have my own version of this coming up in **Topic IV.A.2**, when I point out that hyenas are considered closer to cats than to dogs. But it is here that we see the wisdom of G.K. Chesterton when he said, "The morbid logician seeks to make everything lucid, and succeeds in making everything mysterious. The mystic allows one thing to be mysterious, and everything else becomes lucid."

So, how does the Duck Test help us answer the issue of the "omni-God?" Words have definitions, and this is true for "omni-words" as well. If the Biblical description of Jehovah resembles the definitions of these "omni-words," then the rational expectation is that Jehovah can be described by these words. It falls on the skeptic to provide evidence that Jehovah is an exception, if such an exception is even possible.

ii) Introduction: This is perhaps the most telling part of the video. We actually see Hank admit that, in previous videos, we were only talking about the *existence* of some type of god, not the *characteristics* of this god. He therefore has validated the counter-arguments I made in **Topics F.2.ii** and **F.2.iii**, and has thus discredited his own comments. He almost gets it right by calling the Jewish, Christian and Islamic God the "omni-God," but then he makes the mistake at min 0:41 by assuming the Jewish, Christian and Islamic God are all the same. Furthermore, while I agree that most philosophers since about the 4th Century A.D. would have been talking about Jehovah, the ancient philosophers (**Topic I.B.1**) were not. I do think I should mention that Aristotle came amazingly close to re-engineering Jehovah through reason and logic alone, whereas the Hebrews and Christians were helped by revelation.

iii) Averroes: While not mentioned by name, it was Averroes who originally came up with the "create a rock so heavy He could not lift it" argument. Averroes was a 12th Century A.D. Muslim philosopher and mathematician. I do not know if he could reconcile this apparent dilemma

with the fact that Allah was changeable, as I do not fancy myself an apologist of Islam. But I can explain this dilemma from the Christian perspective, and it comes back to something that will be mentioned again and again as we go through the series: value and meaning. In this case, the value and meaning of words.

If we can babble syllables that have no meaning (like an infant), or do the equivalent with pen and paper, then I agree an infinite number of meaningless arguments can be made against Jehovah. But, by being meaningless sentences, what we have is the No Cat Riddle from **video 4** all over again. These apparent arguments against Jehovah cannot exist because the arguments are just a manifestation of non-existence. To take the Averroes example in particular, weight requires a force pulling in a certain direction, while to lift it requires the rock to move in the opposite direction. These directions require space. As Jehovah transcends space (**Topic C.1**), lifting has no meaning.

iv) Foreknowledge and Free Will: This is a popular argument by atheists, yet is also the easiest to destroy with empirical evidence. I am not sure where such a logical disconnect happens, but in my experience is it sadly common. Hank actually gave two really good examples on why Jehovah can know everything and not deny us free will, and his counter-arguments to these two examples (min 4:10) I find wanting. I, with imperfect knowledge of someone's eating habits in the past, may make an imperfect claim of foreknowledge that this someone will eat an entire pizza in a meal. Without coercion or encouragement from me, I will be right most of the time if my imperfect knowledge is nonetheless sufficient. But Jehovah's knowledge of the past and future is perfect, so His claim to foreknowledge is also perfect.

As for Eleanor Stump (beginning at min 6:30), what we see is a variation of the "Why pray if God already made up His mind?" argument. By using this logic, if we see someone bleeding on the sidewalk, then we need not bother praying to God because He already decided if the person will live or not. But this logic also says we need not bother calling 911 either. Concerning the Thought Bubble, Jehovah created a world as a framework; what we do within this framework (including praying) is our choice. There is a fundamental difference between praying and other actions, however. We can accomplish other actions with a degree of certainty because we live in a universe of predictable behaviors. These predictable behaviors also serve as a limit, as we likewise know what will not happen. In prayer, we are only limited by our imagination, so Jehovah provides limits on how they are answered as we cannot predict their outcomes like He can.

v) Can God Sin?: For the second time in this video, we go back to the No Cat Riddle. The Jewish and Christian belief is that Jehovah is perfectly good, and it is grounded in the belief that nothing exists that He didn't make. We see this in the first two chapters of the Bible (which, in most versions of the Bible, is only two pages of reading). Since nothing exists that is not from Jehovah, He must be completely *selfless* and not the least bit *selfish*. He is intrinsically complete and without want.

Sin, like the No Cat, is a concept of the non-existence of goodness. Indeed, can anything that is considered "bad" *not* be defined as a corruption of something good? Is not "death" a corruption of "life." Is not "fornication" a corruption of sexual pleasure? Is not "gluttony" a corruption of eating? God cannot sin because God cannot deny, contradict, or corrupt Himself. Now, someone may try to turn this around and claim good is the corruption of evil. But our reality has a temporal aspect, so this is only possible if we see time reverse itself. Do we not define death as the point at which something that was once alive is no longer alive? It is a desire to recreate or intensify pleasure from previous experiences that drives one to illicit sexual activity. One learns how to eat before one begins to eat in excess.

vi) Personal Relationship with Man: I would counter, again with empirical evidence that is so common as to be taken for granted, that just because Jehovah is so much greater than us does not mean He cannot have a meaningful relationship with us. Are we not so far removed from our pets that they look to us as gods? We decide if and when they breed, what they eat, what their living conditions are and often how much suffering they must endure before they die. Yet we talk to them and they, in some limited sense, are able to respond to it. Cannot a parent have a meaningful relationship with a newborn child? We condescend to their level so this relationship can exist. And this is only looking at the problem from the perspective of the Old Testament (Yahweh, if you will).

When we get to the New Testament, we see that Jehovah has made the ultimate condescension by becoming human Himself. To claim Jehovah cannot understand us is the ultimate in foolishness for a Christian because He *became* one of us. Furthermore, we also see Jehovah seeking to get us to *ascend* to His level. When Jesus calls us friends (John 15:15) and brothers (Hebrews 2:11), it is in the literal sense. The fact that we are not at His level merely means our journey is not yet done.

vii) Thought Bubble: What we have here is a perfect example of what happens when one seeks to look at particular aspects of Christianity in isolation to the whole (i.e.-looking at Christianity as one wants it to be, as opposed to what it is). I mentioned in **Topic C.1** that being outside of time and space means that what *we* might call the past, present and future to Him is all the same. Stump is overlooking this in her argument. A petitionary prayer made today was known by Jehovah before creation, and therefore accounted for *in* the creation.

I think a better question for the Thought Bubble would have been to ask how petitionary prayer, which is a type of free will, can co-exist with God's will. Again, we have so many everyday examples that we tend to overlook them. When we go to a buffet, the will of the restaurant owner decides what the selection is, but what we pick out of the selection comes from our free will. When one buys a home from a developer, the developer's will has decided what each lot looks like and which house plans can be used, but the buyer still has free will on which lot to choose, which house plan to pick, and hundreds or even thousands of options on details, not to mention a virtually infinite ability to decorate and furnish the house once built.

viii) Knowledge of God: This goes hand-in-hand with what I said about personal relationship with man. It is true that we can never find equality with Jehovah in this life, but that does not mean we shouldn't try. Do we expect a child to stop learning how to read because he cannot read the same books his parents can? Or do we encourage the child to continue in hopes that one day he can read at that level? This is the proper sense to understand what Saint Aquinas is saying here (min 7:39). By placing this topic here, and in the wrong context, I fear it might lead to a defeatist attitude. Hank partly makes amends with two very good examples at min 8:00. But the real defense of Saint Aquinas comes from the fact that anything we cannot see, touch, taste, hear or smell *must* be explained by analogy. Science has to resort to this just as Saint Aquinas did. We cannot take a picture of an electron, as a photo is a collection of electrons. Yet there are many different depictions of electrons in all kinds of science books. And this is only one example from the world of science. For one to find fault with Saint Aquinas on this matter means to find fault with how we teach science.

5) Video 13 (The Problem of Evil): The problem of evil in the world is, without a doubt, the biggest reason to question the omnibenevolence of Jehovah. But the problem is an emotional one, not a rational one. Furthermore, to understand the rational reason, one must accept some hard truths about life, which tends to trigger even more emotions. Small libraries can be filled with books on this matter.

But, ironically, what most people call "evil" is only evil in a Christian context. As I mentioned in **Topic D.6**, determinism denies morality at all and evolutionism only sees "good" in a trait that helps one species survive against other species. Paganism does allow the concept of "good" and "evil," but only in the sense of what benefits the gods. Patriarchs define "good" and "evil" by whatever pleases or displeases them personally, and many are quite secretive in their ulterior goals unless one pays very close attention to what is said (as I pointed out in **Topic D.6** concerning Singer). Fortunately, since so much of patriarchy ultimately comes back to what Christians call "good" and "evil," it is usually easy to understand if explained. But the Christian should never assume the morals of a patriarch align with Christianity. For the Christian, anything that is aligned with Jehovah's Eternal Law is "good" and anything not aligned with it is "evil." While easy to define, to act on it is admittedly involved. Yet the process is quite elegant and intuitive once understood (**Topic VII.B**).

i) Introduction: We begin with Hank claiming that evil cannot be explained, even though the entire video gives many examples of doing just this. Furthermore, I just gave a brief description how the major moral codes do explain evil. While "good and evil" can mean different things to different people, "good" invariably implies something desirable within the moral code while "evil" is not desirable. And we can generalize all possible perspectives to remarkably few alternatives.

ii) A Look at Morality:

a) Determinism: To a true determinist (**Block V**), good and evil are illusionary as nothing is in our control and we simply observe the universe in motion (if I may be allowed to assume that observation itself is not also an illusion).

b) Evolutionism: To an evolutionist, good and evil are dependent solely on what helps or hinders the species given the particular circumstances the species finds itself in (which can change suddenly and drastically). Evolutionists certainly can, on occasion, justify using what many Westerners consider "virtues" when the situation warrants. Sacrificing oneself to allow fellow villagers time to escape a threat will be called "good" by an evolutionist, while hiding and watching the village be slaughtered would be "evil" if one could otherwise have done something to save them. But in most cases, the opposite attitude is what is best for the species. If the species needs good fighters to survive, then it is good for a desirable woman to be the prize for man-on-man combat because such activity ensures the best fighters beget more good fighters. This is the same logic race horse owners use to sire fast horses. And since the wanton slaughter of good fighters within a community would defeat the purpose of making more good fighters, the man losing his wife should be allowed to live in many cases. The loser would, however, be "evil" if he tried to assassinate the one who won his wife in an effort to get her back. We can go on and on: if a species needs to reproduce, then rape is "good" while chastity is "evil." If two species need a single resource to survive, then genocide is "good" while sharing is "evil." And these examples are only for what the video calls "moral evil." To an evolutionist, "natural evil" would be an oxymoron. For them, nature is neither good nor evil; it is simply the background in which the perpetual struggle takes place. Surviving a hurricane is no more good or evil than surviving in fair weather, it's just a different set of challenges to be overcome.

c) Paganism: For pagan gods, there are indeed a myriad of ideas of what is "good" or "evil," largely dependent on the god itself and oftentimes on the mood of the god at the time. For the gods who benefited from man's peaceful co-existence, we can certainly find many ideas of "goodness" that parallel the Christian ideals. But the problem with choosing paganism for a moral code is that society as a whole cannot pick and choose which gods to worship: either they are all accepted or none at all. Furthermore, far from being pillars of virtue, pagan gods inevitably represent both the good and

bad side of ethical behaviors, as they likewise represent the excess of the "virtue" in question as well.

Like evolutionism, natural evil is an oxymoron to paganism, as natural disasters are either punishments from the gods for moral evil taking place among their worshipers, or evidence that the gods of a hostile army are more powerful than the gods of those who suffer the natural disaster.

d) Christianity: It is only in Christianity that we find a flexible yet consistent moral code, something I will explain in detail in **Block VII**. It focuses on the good of all, and on one's duty to promote it. I don't want to imply that no Christians are bad, or that no non-Christian can be good (from a Christian perspective), but rather that I can judge someone based on how one behaves with respect to one's professed beliefs. I can't call Singer unethical for condoning the execution of the Jews and other undesirables by the Nazis, because his evolutionist moral code accepts it. But I can call him hypocritical on his views of bestiality because it is difficult to find any evolutionary advantage to the practice. Likewise, as Native Americans and Vikings thought that being captured in battle was a disgrace that prevented the captive from going to their idea of paradise, it was a form of charity for the captors to torture them to death so they could regain lost honor by showing bravery. Rather than the "conversion or death" threats non-Christians accuse Christians of today, it was actually the brutality of the other moral codes that made Christianity so appealing.

e) Patriarchism: It is, obviously, difficult to accuse a patriarchist of being a hypocrite as their moral system is whatever they want it to be. However, I think it is wise to look at what their morality *really* means as opposed to the way they advertise it. I have already mentioned that Singer's views of animal rights finds nothing wrong with sexual intercourse across the species, and this is by his own admission. In **video 44**, we are led to believe that he also sees no problem with mankind as a whole starving to death as the solution to feeding a few (which appears to contradict his evolutionist claims). And I am only picking on Singer because he is the most quoted philosopher in the series. He simply dominates the final block. Notable contemporary atheist philosophers, both those mentioned and not mentioned (Richard Dawkins and the late Hitchens are curiously absent from the series) focus on different "social ills," yet their solutions invariably lead to even bigger problems. This is due, in no small part, because they genuinely do not see the new ills as a problem within their moral code. It is estimated that 60,000,000 people starved to death in the socialist experiments in Russia, China and Cambodia. They defined human dignity in terms of economic equality, not sanctity of life or quality of life (terms used in **video 17**). As long as everyone had the same things at the end (and no matter how wretched those things were), the cost in life and suffering to get there was an ethical price to be paid based on their morality.

iii) Epicurus Dilemma: As soon as we get past the opening sequence, the very first thing presented is what is known as the Epicurus Dilemma: How can Jehovah be omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent? I find the lack of philosophers used in this video quite surprising, as the one and only philosopher named in it is John Hicks, someone I had not heard of before (more on this later). On the other hand, an Ancient great is not given credit for an argument that sets the tone for this whole video.

The actual argument from Epicurus went like this: "Is god willing to prevent evil, but not able? If so, he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?"

Such a line of questioning is answered by the Crucifixion of Jesus (Jehovah as incarnate man). Jehovah was so willing to save man from himself that Jehovah not only humbled Himself to be a

human, but also to willingly endure the most humiliating and painful death known at the time (and quite possibly for all time). By suffering the punishment (also called a debt) for our sins, He was able to save us from it. Evil was not something Jehovah created, but rather the consequence of man rejecting Jehovah. Epicurus predated Christianity, but we see that the cause of evil and a promise to fix the evil are explained in the third chapter of Genesis, written about 1,000 years before Epicurus was alive. Jehovah, as an omni-god, answers the dilemma that the pagan gods Epicurus knew of could not.

iv) Moral and Natural Evil: As I mentioned earlier, evil only exists in a religious context, or in the context of someone who takes the role of a god. But of all the philosophies, only Christianity and those who embrace environmentalism as a tenet to their Moral code can look at natural events as being evil. As such, I find it rather foolhardy for Hank to claim natural disasters as a means to bring doubt on Christianity. If he really wanted to discredit Christianity with natural evil, he really needed to suggest natural evil cannot exist, and for reasons I will now explain.

The first three chapters of Genesis account for moral and natural evil. As man was put in charge of the world and all that is in it, the world likewise became corrupted with man. We only see this being brought up as a serious point once at min 4:23, by claiming we cannot be responsible for the plates of the Earth moving, although at other times, in minor ways, he seems willing to accept that maybe man can be the cause natural evil. We also know that the premise for environmentalism is literally that man is destroying the world. I don't know how Hank feels about environmentalism, but I do know a great many atheists who do believe in it. Environmentalists, at least, can find no problem linking man's moral evil with natural evil without being hypocritical.

v) Free Will Defense: While I acknowledge that there are those who embrace this theory, it is an example of "assigning purpose where none existed," which Hank used when attempting to discredit Saint Aquinas in **video 10**. While some Christians do fall for this fallacy, it does not make the fallacy legitimate. Free will is essential for love to exist, as one can never be made to love another without consent. Consent implies a choice, and choice requires free will. It is the *abuse* of free will that leads to all manner of evil.

vi) Thought Bubble: Another example of the Thought Bubble providing a very legitimate point, just not the one intended. This video was intended to explain moral and natural evil, but this is not even hinted at. Instead, it answers another question about an omnibenevolent god: Why would a God of love allow any human to suffer eternity in Hell? And here we see what has the potential to be a quite complex problem explained quite succinctly: no one is in Hell that did not choose to be there. Ivan, by his own free will, chose to go to Hell. Any attempt to justify Ivan's decision because Jehovah did not stop him must think twice about what omnibenevolence really means. Would an omnibenevolent God hold Ivan captive, against his will, in Heaven? Would that not turn Heaven into Hell for Ivan anyway? And what about those who had to co-exist with Ivan in such a state, would that not make Heaven a Hell for them as well?

vii) Dualism: Most of the talk in the video takes a dualist approach to the problem of evil (**Topic D.5**). The "both sides of the coin" and the soul-making theodicy of Hicks both have their place in explaining evil. But they have to be taken in proper context. To claim that "...good cannot exist without its opposite" (min 6:05) actually *is* dualism and therefore *not* Christianity. As for Hicks, I don't have a problem with what was said, but there is much left unsaid. Much of the Christian mythology demonstrates how Jehovah turns our rejection of Him into an opportunity for saving grace, culminating in the execution of a perfectly innocent man (Jesus) in order for Satan to forfeit his claim on our wretched lives. As Satan can no longer claim our souls by right, he can only claim them by our own

choice (**Topic F.5.i**). But the weakness of the soul-making theodicy is actually given at min 8:03, when Hank asks why so much evil seems to be out of proportion to good. The glaring omission is the concept of Heaven. An eternity in Heaven will more than compensate for a lifetime of excruciating pain on Earth. In **video 15**, we will talk about Pascal's Gamble. I am not particularly fond of this theory, but it does have its place and this is one example of its proper place.

viii) Evidential Problem of Evil: This idea, along with soul-making theodicy, is not really thought out, but rather the two are kind of intertwined with Hank picking and choosing which part to speak of as suits him best. In **video 16**, I will talk about man's "disordered appetites." Disordered appetites are unique idea to Christianity and is the key reason why Christian morals work so well when understood and executed (more in **Block VII**). And, despite himself, Hank actually helps us to understand why the Christian method works. As man generally cannot control himself, the real question is not why is there *so much* evil (from a Christian perspective of course), but why is there *not even more*? If one takes an honest look at cultures that did not know Christianity (such as Phoenicians burning children alive by the hundreds as a sacrifice to Moloch), or rejected Christianity (such as every Socialist government ever founded), we can actually see just how much Jehovah *has* stopped the Christian idea of evil through Jesus and His followers.

ix) Parting Shots: To start things off, I want to draw attention to what Hank asks towards the end of the video: "what good, for example, could possibly correspond to the horrors of a genocide?" (min 8:12). This is an example of the problem that comes when one is not consistent with how one uses words. In **Block VIII**, being inconsistent with the word love pretty much destroys every rational argument used to promote the socialist agenda there. But to stay on topic here, please note that it is only in the Christian context where one can question the "goodness" of genocide. Singer, if the gentle reader remembers, actually endorsed genocide with his evolutionist leanings (**Topic D.6**). I am not aware of any pagan beliefs that were shocked at genocide, as long as they were the ones doing the killing. Of course, a patriarch is able to decide on his own personal preference if genocide is "good" or "bad."

Next, I don't mind not knowing of Hicks before this video, but considering how much time I spend studying apologetics, I am surprised. Why pick such an obscure philosopher, especially since no other philosopher is mentioned by name in the entire video? C.S. Lewis had much to say about this topic. Even if this were the only video in the entire series that Lewis would have been mentioned in, this would be arguably the best one for it. Likewise, George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton would be good to hear from. For contemporaries, Bishop Barron (a Catholic) and Dr. Jordan Peterson (who was not even Christian, but an agnostic at the time this video was made) would also have been good choices.

Finally, I think William P. Young's *The Shack* would have been a much more appropriate Thought Bubble than *The Brothers Karamazov*, and would have been a book I think more viewers would have actually been familiar with.

6) Video 14 (Anti-Vaxxers, Conspiracy Theories & Epistemic Responsibility): My biggest problem with this video is not so much the content (although I have comments on that as well), but rather the timing. This really should have been done in the first block, as it is a basic tenet for philosophy in general. Also, it does a much better job describing bad faith than **video 16** does. And I want to suggest that this being placed here was not by accident, as the quote from W.K. Clifford at min 5:40 makes it quite clear that this is a deliberate effort to ridicule Christianity.

i) Belief: I agree that one should not base a philosophy of life on irrational beliefs. Why should I believe in, say for example, Apollo when I don't believe he drives the sun around in his chariot because no evidence of this can be found? He cares nothing for my welfare beyond what I can do for him, and there is no evidence that ignoring him will cause me any harm. If I didn't think that there were rational reasons to believe in Jehovah, then I would not be a Christian today either. But, unlike Apollo, the only two real arguments made against Jehovah in the series were whether or not infinite regress (**video 10**) and intelligent design (**video 11**) are real. Current scientific evidence supports Jehovah on both of these matters, and I believe rather conclusively considering intelligent design. Furthermore, I find many things providing evidence *for* Jehovah, with free will (**video 24**) and imagination (**video 29**) being the strongest ones.

ii) Proof: As I have stated before, there is no such thing as proof, other than our own existence. We saw this with Descartes in **video 5**. I discussed scientific "proof" in **video 8**. I prefer the term credibility. The consistency of our life experiences is what gives credibility to the reality we believe in, but we are ultimately unable to prove anything other than our own existence. With this in mind, Clifford's maxim contradicts itself. But it is not necessarily a careless choice of words that bothers me here, but the subtle change in attitude that is taking place. Note how we went from "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon *insufficient evidence*." (min 2:18, italic mine) to "One thing his arguments were meant to show is that religious belief is epistemically irresponsible. Belief in a God *whose existence can't be proven* was simply "blind faith."" (italics mine) at min 5:37. This is a classic and clear example of imposing a double standard on the theist.

iii) William James: Although I applaud his effort to justify Jehovah, I have some comments to make on his argument (at least as presented in the video). First of all, note that James himself moved from the concept of "proof" to "sufficient evidence." I have no problem with this. But then he claims no such evidence exists. I strongly disagree here. I have spent much of this block providing such evidence on Hank's own terms, and will provide more evidence on my terms with free will (**video 24**) and imagination (**video 29**).

Secondly, James made an argument from analogy (**video 2**) defense for the faith, which I feel is a rather weak argument to begin with because it basically supports the idea that there is no evidence. But to make matters worse, he created a system to compensate for the alleged lack of evidence. Any system made by man can be gamed to produce desirable results. This was demonstrated in this video with anti-VAXes. A whole video will be dedicated to this concept (**video 37**), and even Saint Aquinas admitted to this with Natural Law Theory (**video 34**). The theological virtues of faith and hope (**Topics VII.B.1.i** and **VII.B.1.ii**) may seem like "toothless wonders," yet those who embrace them realize that there is no "gaming" when it comes to Jehovah. What is best for oneself is to use the system as intended.

Finally, while I understand the context James meant when he claimed that agnosticism is the equivalent of Atheism (the Catholic Church, in the explicit sense that many agnostics are not searching for God, agrees so as well, calling them "practicing atheists" in Catechism of the Catholic Church #2128), it is a danger to take this claim outside the intended context. Contemporary atheists love to blend this "practical atheism" with "theoretical atheism" and use it as a weapon against Christians. Hitchens, in a famous debate against Dr. William Lane Craig at Biola University, claimed "After all, Dr. Craig, to win this argument, has to ... prove to certainty. He's not just saying there might be a God, because he has to say that there must be one; otherwise, we couldn't be here, and there couldn't be morality. It's not a contingency for him." What we see here is that, for some unexplained reason, Dr. Craig *must* have absolute proof to believe what he believes in, while Hitchens can believe whatever he wants without

the need for proof. Of course, if absolute proof existed (which I have denied several times since **video 5**), it would no longer be belief. Again, we see someone attacking Christianity with vague terms that are used inconsistently. What is it that Hitchens believes in? If he is an atheist and denies the existence of Jehovah, then where is his proof that Jehovah does not exist? If he is an agnostic and does not know what to believe in, then what right does he have to demand something from a Christian that he won't ask of an atheist? He freely moves from the position of attacking Christianity as an atheist to defending himself as an agnostic. And he makes it quite explicit elsewhere in the debate that this is exactly what he is doing: "It's often said, it was said tonight, that atheists think they can prove the non-existence of god. This, in fact, very slightly but crucially misrepresents what we've always said. Here's what we argue. We argue quite simply that there's no plausible or convincing reason, certainly no evidential one, to believe that there is such an entity, and that all observable phenomena are explicable without the hypothesis." Many contemporary atheists have so demonized the word "belief" that they refuse to acknowledge their own beliefs as such, but instead hide behind a science that only exists in their imagination. Christians, in my opinion, need to stop letting those who attack the faith get away with such verbal shell games.

iv) The Socialist Movement: For the first time, we have a major effort to spread the socialist agenda, and I don't think it is by accident that it took place in the religion Block. To plant the idea that our beliefs are contagious, no matter how hard we try to keep them to ourselves, is perhaps the single most cancerous idea this series endorses. And if such insidious activities can result in catastrophic results to mankind, does it not follow that our governments have a moral obligation to stop it? All one needs to do to see the foolishness of this argument is to turn it around. By what standard should I determine if my elected leaders have toxic ideas of their own? If I, from my humble home and place of modest work, can potentially contaminate society, how much more virulent would a politician be who determines the laws the whole of society must obey?

v) Thought Bubble: Once again, we have a Thought Bubble explaining a valuable point that is completely detached from what it is supposed to support. This Thought Bubble does a beautiful job explaining exactly why extreme rationalism is so destructive. Indeed, it may very well be an example of absolute rationalism. The Thought Bubble shows that there is a price to be paid for such silliness when reality finally comes around.

vi) Parting Shot: While never discussed anywhere in the series, the argument presented by Clifford does make me wonder how he lived his life. In keeping with what has already been said about morality, did Clifford live his life as if there was a God by being a "good" or "decent" person? If the answer is "yes," then is he not calling himself "epistemically irresponsible" for following the ideals of a god he denies exists?

7) Video 15 (Indiana Jones & Pascal's Wager): Hank brings back the grossly flawed conclusion that religion is baseless and therefore dangerous (**video 14**), and reinforces it with evidence coming from "Christian" philosophers. As I already claimed in **Topic I.B.3**, Blaise Pascal's ideas are defensive in nature and Soren Kierkegaard's ideas actually fractured Christianity. As one who fractured Christianity, he certainly cannot be considered a representative of mainstream Christian thought. Still, talking about Pascal's Wager and fideism is not the problem as they are legitimate topics for this block. The problem is when they are used with grossly faulty philosophical principals, and by failing to explain just how unpopular they actually are in mainstream Christianity.

There are two philosophies presented here to support Jehovah: Pascal's Wager and fideism. Pascal's Wager has its place, but it is a very passive argument, even to the point of being defeatist. Fideism is a bit more complicated. There are two types of fideism: one that accepts faith as separate

from, but not incompatible with, reason, and one that places faith as both separate from and incompatible with reason. Most Christians accept the former definition, and the Catholic Church explicitly states that faith and reason are in a symbiotic relationship (Catechism of the Catholic Church #159). As Saint Augustine said, "I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe." But only the second definition is used here. Concerning both Pascal's Wager and fideism, the Catholic Church does not believe in "arm twisting" to join the faith, which is what this video devolves into.

i) Indiana Jones: I find the use of Indiana here quite deceitful on several levels. I certainly agree that Indiana is pragmatic, but that is not the same as the fideism talked about here. I want to point out that the Nazis manipulated Indiana into doing what he did in two different ways at the same time. The first was to exploit his obsessive need to discover ancient artifacts, and the second was to hold his father's life hostage. Indiana did what he did, not because he was going through the motions of Christianity, but because it was the only way to satisfy both of his obsessive needs.

But what is worse here is a very clear example of what I spoke of concerning Hitchens in **video 14**: playing both the agnostic defense and an atheistic attack against theism. Hank claims that Indiana is the archetypal agnostic, seeking all kinds of religious artifacts yet calling religion "hocus pocus." Does a child collecting sea shells on the beach classify himself as a zoologist? I would hope those with degrees in zoology would say no! Indiana is a clear-cut atheist who is pragmatic enough to accept whatever boons religion serves him. He just doesn't care to question why the artifacts of religions he denies exist still work as intended. Indiana is a classic case of acting on bad faith. Sadly, all too many people follow his lead.

ii) Pascal's Wager: Hank begins by saying that Pascal's Wager is not about proof but about pragmatism, and with this I agree. The problem is, the video quickly moves to using it as a proof. But first, let's discuss the pragmatism. Like most Christians, I agree that this should not be a "scared straight" technique for conversion to, or retention of, Christians. It is for this reason that many apologists reject Pascal's Wager altogether, while others re-word it into a more accurate and useful statement (such as C.S. Lewis when he said "Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important." ("Christian Apologetics," found in *God in the Dock*)).

Hank seems to think that all Pascal's Wager does is prove that Christians have no real means to gain converts except through fear, hence all Christians have immature faith because it is unchallenged. I, however, think it serves the purpose of stirring non-Christians with immature faith out of their acedia. The threat of making the wrong decision about the existence of Jehovah is simply too severe to discard casually. If a non-Christian can seriously challenge his beliefs and remain a non-Christian fully knowing the severity of the possibility of being wrong, then he has my utmost respect. But to turn Pascal's Wager into a proof instead of an incentive defeats the purpose of it. When some claim that giving up time for a nonexistent god is a cost that should be considered, they miss the whole point. And it was a point that even Hank was honest enough to admit to: no Earthly cost can compare to the reward of Heaven and no Earthly gain is worth the penalty of Hell. The correct response to this nonsense is to bring it back on track: that the stakes are too high to simply marginalize one's beliefs concerning it. Unfortunately, the counter-counter-argument presented in the video, while truthful, actually endorses this flaw rather than fixes it, and the results of this effort are sadly predictable.

iii) Fake It Til You Get It: This is perhaps the worst case of straw manning in the whole series. While there are those who would agree with such an approach, I think we can all agree that they are of immature faith, and therefore not worthy of discussion here. We see many, many

examples from the Bible that there is more to getting into Heaven than merely "checking some boxes." It is a lifestyle. Among other things, we are called to be obedient, and there are things Christians do that may not have a clear-cut, rational explanation for it. But one cannot measure how obedient one is if one is obedient only because they see how they can benefit (or at least not suffer) by being obedient. True obedience can only be measured by how one behaves when no obvious reason exists for them to do so, or if to do so means facing obvious disadvantage. So, while Hank is not "wrong" in the literal sense, what we have is a massive overstating of the case at hand.

iv) Teapotism: While Hank continues to criticize religion throughout the series, this is undoubtedly the most disturbing attempt. He infers an argument from analogy meant to discredit religion by comparing all religion to Teapotism. Furthermore, Hank cannot bring himself to explicitly say that; instead he says, "I'm sure you see where I'm going with this." (min 7:17) I hope I have already given more than enough evidence to show how different Christianity is from Teapotism. As the series goes on, I will continue to provide evidence for the existence of Jehovah.

Much has already been written on Russell's Teapot, on both the theist and atheist side. Most of it simply is foolishness, as what is presented in this video. Russell did not originally claim that this teapot had some influence on our daily lives as the video suggests, only that some ancient, sacred text claimed that there was indeed such a teapot in orbit. Actually, even Russell's argument is somewhat preposterous, as the idea of a heliocentric system (i.e.-everything orbited about the Sun instead of the Earth) was not popular until the 17th century, a time period not normally considered "ancient." But regardless of the historical appropriateness of his example, Russell successfully made a valid point.

But, to me, Teapotism ultimately flounders when asked "so what?" If one wants to believe such a teapot exists, then what affect does it have on me? This is the same argument I made concerning Apollo in the previous video. If one can find neither evidence of the teapot nor the impact it will have in their lives, then any such belief is merely one made in bad faith.

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video 9 link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmTsS5xFA6k&t=93s
video 10 link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TgisehuGOyY&t=59s
video 11 link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7e9v_fsZB6A&t=57s
video 12 link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs_gY1K1AMU
video 13 link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AzNEG1GB-k
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