**God (Necessary Rational Being)**

1. The Fundamental Reality is the necessary, eternal, uncaused, omnipotent, omniscient, rational being we call God, the Alpha and Omega of all things.

2. God, by an act of creative will and infinite power, brings all contingent beings the infinite distance from non-existence into existence, and in so doing brings all of time and space into existence, as well. Thus begins the universe.

3. God imposes order on universe, and sets it in motion, governed by the eternal law (divine order), and destined, according to His plan and purpose, for an end knowable only to Him.

4. At a time and place of His choosing, God creates a species of contingent rational beings in His own image, a being with reason and free will, a being capable of happiness and misery, and aware of itself as a contingent rational being. This is Man, created for himself, and for participation in the divine life.

5. By virtue of the gift of reason, Man is able to rationally apprehend the natural, moral law and the existence of the eternal lawgiver. He is able to discern how he ought to choose and act in order that he might become virtuous, and thereby happy.

6. Theistic Conclusion: We are as we were created to be: rational, free, possessed of a discernable nature, brought into being with inherent value, a destiny and purpose for being, and the capacity to rationally choose and act in pursuit of our highest end: heaven.

7. Morality, then, is simply the instruction manual for the virtuous use of our rational capacity, the framework for freely actualizing our potential for the good, and the standard by which the use of our freedom may be evaluated.

**ADEQUATE ANTHROPOLOGY!!!**

**Random Material Accident (Materialism)**

1. The Fundamental Reality is simply matter, its physical properties, and the laws of physics which govern it. Where did it come from? No one knows.

2. Somehow, some dramatic primordial event happens, setting off a chain of physical events which are still playing out in the universe.

3. Matter flies out into the void, and begins randomly colliding and combining, governed entirely by the non-rational laws of physics.

4. Over tens of billions of years, trillions of random outcomes of incalculably unlikely nano-events conclude (temporarily) in a conglomeration of atoms that is us, *homo sapiens*.

5. Human beings - like all entities of every order of being - are the random, temporary by-product of a blind, unguided series of physical events playing out the pre-determined, inevitable path matter must take, given the material laws to which it is inescapably subject.

6. Materialist Conclusion: We are neither free, nor rational (determinism). We have no nature, nor essence (existentialism). We have no intrinsic purpose, nor value (relativism).

7. To say of these random, temporary material accidents (so-called “humans”) that they “ought” or “ought not” to do anything is irrational NONSENSE. Morality can no more apply to us than to a tomato or a tomcat.

8. Morality cannot exist, nor can there even be any coherent justification for the rule of law. This leaves right and wrong to be calculated, and imposed, by the will of the strong, the perceived “good of society”, or the tyranny of majority opinion.

**INADEQUATE ANTHROPOLOGY!!!**



**The Four Human Questions: Catholic vs. Materialist Understanding of Fundamental Reality**

**Everything comes from: GOD (Catholicism)**

1. Who am I? (Identity) We are infinitely precious to God; beloved sons and daughters, created in His image and likeness, unique and unrepeatable, with inviolable dignity, inestimable worth, rational intelligence and free will. We are able to know, will, choose, act and love, in the very image of the God who made us.

2. Where do I come from? (Origin) We come from a free and original act of God’s creative will. We have literally been loved into existence from all eternity, by the Almighty, who, at the moment of our conception, breathed life into the union of biological material our parents contributed, creating a new spiritual soul, which will exist forever. God intended us and loved us, and still does.

3. What am I for? (Purpose) This is in a real sense the central question of every human life. As Catholics, we know that God entrusts to each of us a vocation, a role in the great drama of creation, a calling particular to us, for which God has fitted us with our individual combination of talents and strengths, flaws and shortcomings. For a Catholic this question is always addressed first to God, it is seeking His will for the life He gave us. To find and embrace our vocation is to find happiness and fulfillment, to become who we are called to be.

4. Where am I going? (Destiny) As Catholics we know that we will spend eternity somewhere, and where depends on our use of our free will. God will honor our free will by giving us what we chose and loved – Himself or ourselves – for all eternity. To serve ourselves is to lose both God and ourselves. Hell is eternal separation from God, apart from whom existence becomes eternal spiritual dying, but never the release of death, for spirits cannot die. Hell is complete isolation, the loss of everything, and everyone, but ourselves for ever. The secret Catholics know is that to seek God and love God first is to get not only God, but our truest, best selves in the bargain. Heaven is eternal union with God, in which we find eternal life in the life of the Trinity.

**OR it all comes from: MATTER (Materialism)**

1. Who am I? (Identity) Thomas Hobbes: “Everything is reducible to matter in motion.” You are the random, unintended, temporary outcome of a blind, purposeless process of matter tumbling through the void of time and space, combining and recombining as pre-determined by the inexorable laws of physics. You are a buzzing cloud of atoms, a lump of stuff. Therefore, nothing can accurately be said of you beyond what can be said of any clump of atoms.

2. Where do I come from? (Origin) You come from the Big Bang. Given the multitude of physical constants that determine how matter must act in the universe, and the temperature, velocity and mass present at the Big Bang, it was inevitable that, at the time of your conception, an utterly insignificant amount of matter would fall together for an utterly insignificant amount of time. This is you. You just happened. The universe didn’t notice; the universe doesn’t care.

3. What am I for? (Purpose) Given who you are and where you are from, this question is ultimately futile and without meaning. You are an accident of physics and evolution, and accidents don’t *mean* anything, they just happen. The lump of stuff that is you was not intended, created or willed. You might try the “Project-of-Me”: attempt to create meaning and value for yourself but, given the inescapable outcome of your existence, it is ultimately an investment in nothing. So eat, drink and be merry…

4. Where am I going? (Destiny) You are headed for death, physical disintegration, and eternal non-existence. Just as the blind forces of physics and evolution shoved your atoms together, soon enough those same blind forces will tear you apart. Since all you are is a temporary, buzzing cloud of atoms, that physical disintegration is, really, the end of you and all your projects. Death is annihilation, nothing and no one survives it. It ends all projects, and brings to the same conclusion the best and worst of lives. Everyone loses everything, and everyone.

**Some Handy Philosophical Terminology**

**The Good Stuff: Some Helpful “ologies” (and a handful of bonus items):** The moral law is inextricably interwoven with the theology, anthropology, ontology, teleology and eschatology of the human person – the ***adequate anthropology*** on which you can build a Culture of Life.

**1. Theology:** The quest to understand God and what God has revealed to us. If God exists, then He is the highest (and most fundamental) reality and the greatest good, on which all other realities and goods depend, therefore, the quest to understand Him and what He has revealed is the highest of human endeavors. The end, or goal, of our human nature is union with God.

**2. Anthropology:** The quest to understand Man and find answers for the four human questions. Man, properly understood as created, intended, and loved by God, in God’s image (adequate anthropology), has inherent, unalienable value and dignity, and must be treated accordingly.

**3. Ontology:** The quest to understand the nature or essence of a thing - what it really is in itself and what it is really meant to be, and what that tells us about how we ought to relate to it.

**4. Teleology:** The quest to understand the purpose, reason, end or goal of a thing – its intended destiny, so to speak. To know the purpose for which a thing was created also tells us a great deal about how we ought to relate to it, and what should be done with its existence.

**5. Eschatology:** The quest to understand the four last things – death, judgment, heaven and hell – on both the micro (individual) and macro (mankind) level. Here we are dealing with the eternal destiny (teleology) of the human person. We are particularly interested to understand how these last things inform how we ought to live the life we have been given, and why.

**6. Philosophy:** Literally, the love (*filia*) of wisdom (*Sophia*). The quest to understand reality, truth, God, knowledge, the human person and the reasons behind what we see, and think and do. Philosophy is the discipline of seeking to understand clearly, and apply rationally, the world of ideas, and the consequences of those ideas.

**7. Metaphysics:** That which is beyond/above (*meta*) the physical. The quest to understand the immaterial realities in the universe, such as spirit, existence, being, mind, soul, will, intellect, thought, judgment, emotion, memory, imagination, etc. Metaphysics is central to our understanding of both God and the human person, for God is pure spirit, and we are a body united to the only spiritual soul. All those powers which distinguish Man from the animals are metaphysical powers.

**8. Morality/Ethics:** The quest to know and understand the principles by which we ought to live our lives in pursuit of the good. God willed us each into existence as free, rational creatures made in his image and destined to spend eternity with Him in heaven. Thus the moral law is inextricably interwoven with the theology, anthropology, ontology, teleology and eschatology of the human person – the ***adequate anthropology*** on which you can build a Culture of Life.

**9. Objective:** Something that is the same for all individuals. Public, and able to be experienced directly, discussed, evaluated and argued about by two or more individuals. Something that exists outside the mind and emotions of an individual, and whose reality applies universally, and stands independent of what anyone might think, believe or feel about it. Your thoughts, beliefs, feelings and opinions about something objective are verifiable, and more or less right or wrong, depending on how accurately you know, understand and describe the object. Mt. Everest is objective, whether I have seen it, or even believe it is there. So is truth. So is God.

**10. Subjective:** Personal experience, perspective and preference. Anything that can be different for different individuals. Private, cannot be experienced directly or debated rationally by two or more individuals (“Vanilla ice cream is best! No, chocolate! No, vanilla!”). Something that may exist only in the mind, perceptions, feelings or opinions of a person, and whose reality is contained entirely in that persons experience and perceptions, and can be changed or altered by any number of factors. Your thoughts, beliefs, feelings and opinions about something subjective are not verifiable, nor are they right or wrong, they are just yours. My opinion of rap music, or my feelings about windsurfing, are subjective. I can explain my subjective experience, and try to persuade you to feel the same way, but my subjective experience is not an object outside myself that you can experience directly, or understand as I do, or whose reality is universal and the same for all individuals.

**\*Important Note:** The question of whether morality is objective or subjective is a *really* big deal. If morality is objective, you can be right or wrong about what is right or wrong, that single standard applies to everyone, and we can all evaluate, choose and act accordingly. If morality is merely subjective, it really is up to each individual to decide what they *feel* is right and wrong, and the only appropriate moral action is to leave everyone alone to live by whatever code of ethics they’ve come up with for themselves.

**11. God:** The free, rational, personal, infinite, eternal, all-powerful, all-good, all-knowing cause and sustainer of the universe. The source of all being and existence. Creator of Man, whom He created in His image and likeness and later redeemed.

**12. Universe:** Everything which exists, but is not God. The sum total of all contingent (dependent on something prior and other for its existence) things, receivers of being. This can include multiverses, bubble universes, etc., etc., etc. Again, everything which exists, but is not God.

**13. Mystery/Sacred Mystery:**  Those truths which are beyond man’s ability to reach by reason. The content of God’s self-revelation. Available to us only if God wills to reveal them, just like the truths about any other person that we can only know if that person chooses to reveal them to us.

**The Bad Stuff: The Deadly “isms”:** Now for the bad news, the “isms” that threaten, erode and undermine the Judeo-Christian worldview – the ***inadequate anthropology*** that underlies and forms our Culture of Death:

**8. Naturalism/Materialism:** The idea that the only thing that exists is matter in motion. This would mean that the only reality is physical – no mind, no soul, no freedom, no creativity or imagination, just biochemical processes and their various by-products. A denial of the reality and possibility of metaphysics. But matter can’t give what it doesn’t have. Non-living, non-rational atoms (or Higgs Bosons, or whatever is the latest, smallest theoretical particle of matter) can’t produce life, or reason. We humans have both, which means we got them from something other than matter, which means something more than matter exists – something living and rational, with the power to give both life and reason to a creature. Read the book of Genesis in the Bible if you are interested in finding out Who that life-and-reason-giver is.

**9. Scientism/Empiricism:** The idea that the only valid knowledge is knowledge arrived at by physical science, and verifiable by physical science. This would mean many things, but for our discussion primarily that none of the “ologies” above have anything meaningful or true to say about reality. By the way, the foundation statement of scientism is a self-defeating proposition. “The only valid knowledge is knowledge arrived at, and verifiable by, the physical sciences,” is neither arrived at, nor verifiable by, the physical sciences. So the thesis statement doesn’t even pass its own test. In technical, philosophical terminology, this is known as “sawing off the branch you are sitting on.”

**10. Atheism/Agnosticism:** The idea that God either does not exist at all, or that his existence has no meaning for our everyday lives – if he even exists, he is completely irrelevant to us. Atheism says God does not exist, agnosticism says I don’t know if he does and, in the current version of agnosticism, it wouldn’t matter anyway. This works out to being “practical atheism”, living as though God doesn’t exist. In the real or practical absence of God, we (Man) become the so-called “Supreme Being”, and so we set about the business of doing in God’s absence what God traditionally did when people believed in him, determining right and wrong, ruling over life and death, deciding whether we are male or female, etc., etc., etc.

**11. Relativism:** The idea that right and wrong are subjective or relative, instead of objective or absolute. This would mean there is no truth that remains true regardless of how people feel about it, or whether they live by it. Instead, truth would be whatever the individual, or society decides it is. This is where we get, “That may be true for you, but it is not true for me, so don’t impose your morality on me.” No one is actually a relativist, they just say they are. No one is a moral relativist when someone breaks into their house in the middle of the night and holds a gun to their daughter’s head. Reject any moral ideology whose strongest possible reaction to that situation leaves you standing there saying mildly, “Hey, man, I can’t impose my morality on you, but I just want you to know that in my morality I prefer that people don’t break into other people’s houses and hold them hostage,” and according to which wrestling the intruder to ground, taking his gun by force, and turning him over to be arrested and jailed would, technically, be imposing your morality on someone who doesn’t share your views.

**12. Progressivism:** The idea that the perspectives, ideas, philosophies, ethical theories and values of today are superior to more traditional ones because they are newer. This would mean that if an older idea or perspective conflicts with a more modern one, we reject and dismiss the older one, because it is older. This also means that guys like Aristotle, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas are considered smart guys *for their time*, and largely ignored. This allows intellectual inferiors to snub their noses at their intellectual superiors from bygone ages, and then advance theories and ideas that would never stand up to the scrutiny of those dead sages, or a contemporary person well-formed in the principles of classical Greco-Christian philosophy. The modern thinkers act as though the ancient sages have been refuted, when in reality they have just been illegitimately ignored.

**13. Utilitarianism:** The idea that whatever produces the most possible happiness for the greatest possible number of people is good, and the choices and actions of people and societies should be guided by that principle. This ends up meaning that if killing or enslaving 1,000 people means that 1 million people’s lives become better, then it would be a good thing to do, even if those millions, or hundreds of millions, of beneficiaries will live in the future. Originally criticized as a morality for swine. Still really useful for breeding tyrants and monsters, and an active principle in the government of most Western nations to this day.

**14. Existentialism:** “Existence precedes essence.” The idea that there are no essences or natures, only naked, unqualified existence. No essence means no nature; no nature means no end; or purpose to life; no end or purpose means no right or wrong actions and choices (good choice and action is always oriented according to our nature, toward our proper end); no right or wrong actions means no morality; no morality no guide or standard for how we live. Existentialists believe we each create our own individual nature by choosing and acting (with no guide or standard), so we are all self-actuating, self-made men and women. They seem to conveniently miss that an existing thing which can choose and act already has a nature, a nature which makes it a being capable of choosing and acting. Completely irrational. Highly influential.

**15. Nihilism:** The idea that we cannot know anything for certain, and so we should not believe or commit ourselves to anything. This would mean that life is meaningless and without purpose, it is every man for himself, might makes right, and we are utterly self-determining - literally a law unto ourselves. This idea ends inevitably in survival of the fittest for humans. “Fittest”, in this equation, eventally comes to mean, of course, the powerful or privileged and their allies and lackeys. Here be dragons.