

PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD : MORE PREAMBLES

What were the consequences of the actions of Martin Luther and Henry Tudor (King Henry VIII) ? Italian philosopher Romano Amerio has encapsulated them in a paragraph.

“Thus, divine authority, which is the sustaining principle of Catholicism, is extirpated and with it go the dogmas of the faith : it is no longer the divine authority of the Church which guarantees them, but subjective individual impressions... [O]ne can say that in Lutheranism... the divine word is accepted only inasmuch as it receives the form of an individual conviction. It is not the thing which demands assent, but assent which gives value to the thing...” (*Iota Unum*, [transl. From Italian by John P Parsons] Kansas City, 1996, pp. 23-4)

Less than 100 years later, the French philosopher, René Descartes set in place the evils introduced by the two Protestants. He turned philosophy on its head with what he thought was a principle of the highest importance, something he said he discovered in a series of visions. He asserted that *the only thing we can be sure of is that we think*. This he expressed in the maxim *cogito ergo sum*—“I think, therefore I am”. But the reality is just the reverse of this. It is because I am (exist) that I can think, You will recall my laying out for you last year the proportionality that characterises the ontological order between—

Natures — Powers — Acts — Ends

Before I can *do* the acts of a man I must first of all *be* a man, with the nature of a man giving me the powers proper to a man. Only then can I do acts such as thinking. *Agere sequitur esse : Do follows be*. What Descartes did was to express as a philosophical principle the subjectivism implicit in the actions of Luther and Henry Tudor. Signor Amerio continues his analysis :

“If... by an internal logic this criticism of divine authority as a theological principle becomes a criticism of reason as a philosophical principle, that is no more than might have been expected...” (*Iota Unum*, *ibid.*)

As part of the penalty of having rejected God's authority, men began collectively to doubt the authority of their own reason, of their own intellects. Descartes had started philosophy on the downward road to perdition.

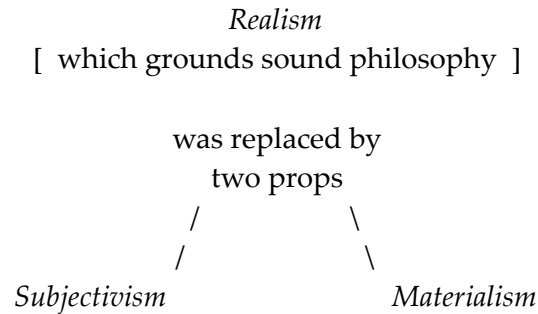


René Descartes

The philosophers who followed Descartes, running with his subjectivist principle, began to doubt whether human reason was capable of addressing the immaterial. Note the logical tie : God is

invisible, immaterial. Having rejected the authority of the invisible and immaterial reality which sustains them in existence, men began to doubt whether reason could address the immaterial at all. The next step was to doubt whether the immaterial existed. The last step was to reject its existence. This is materialism.

Instead of acting normally, walking steadily on two feet in perfect correspondence with the real world outside them, men began, in their thinking, to resemble cripples walking with crutches, the one crutch being subjectivism, the other materialism.



These, then, are the *philosophical* steps by which the Protestant revolt has worked out its consequences in men's lives over the last 500 years.

Rejection of God's authority
Doubt about God's existence
Rejection of God's existence

People arrived at the *agnostic* position in this way—

Subjectivism denies that the senses can know things as they are in themselves ; asserts that we can only know our perceptions. Therefore, we cannot get beyond our perceptions to know objective reality. Therefore we cannot know whether there exists a God or not.

Materialism reduces the intellect to the level of a sense, that is, it regards it as incapable of knowing what does not fall under the senses. But God, if he exists, does not fall under the senses. Therefore the intellect cannot know whether or not God exists.

Which led inevitably to the *atheistic* position—

Science shows that nothing exists which does not fall under the senses. But God, asserted to exist, does not fall under the senses. Therefore God does not exist. Moreover, the majority of men reject the view that God exists, and it is implicit in the tenets of *subjectivism* that the opinion of the majority of men cannot be wrong. *A fortiori*, therefore, God does not exist.

All the above goes to show why we in the 21st century are in the position in which we find ourselves. There has never been a time in all the recorded history of mankind when men have abandoned belief in God so comprehensively and enthusiastically as they have in the last fifty years. Why that should have occurred so suddenly is a topic for another occasion. We must address the issue of proof of God's existence.
