

Materialism

Description

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by Edward Zebrowski

Hello and welcome to the first in a series of videos entitled Principles of Truth. I'm out on a short hike. I thought today would be a good day to discuss an interesting topic that most people are confused about. That topic is materialism or the belief that ALL that exists is matter: physical stuff with shape, size, position, etc. – things like the earth I'm walking on and these trees, even you and me. Only matter exists.

What we are going to dive into is the dichotomy of materialism being true and the existence of anything immaterial. If any form of immateriality exists then materialism is false.

A dichotomy is when two ideas are mutually exclusive to each other. In other words, only one can be true. I'm going to show that immateriality does not exist and, therefore, only materialism is true. As an example of a dichotomy, let's think about a person being in a room. If there are no other people in the room then he's alone in that room. Add a person to the room and he's no longer alone. He has some company. Being alone OR having company is a dichotomy. Either it's true that you're alone or it's false. There is no third option. Like I said, they're mutually exclusive; that's a dichotomy.

Now let's relate the person being alone and having company example to materialism and immateriality. If materialism -being alone- is the belief that all that exists is made up of matter, then the existence of something not matter -some company is in the room – would prove materialism wrong. In other words, if immateriality exists in any form, then materialism is false. Likewise, if 'nothing' immaterial exists, then materialism is true.

I'm going to break down my argument for you and then we can discuss the supporting evidence.

If immateriality does not exist, then materialism is true.

Immateriality does not exist.

Therefore, materialism is true.

So, how do I prove that immateriality does not exist? The word immateriality actually means “not material.” You might think, well now I know what it is. Right? But do I really know what it is? I mean, doesn’t that only tell me what it is not? It’s not material. So really, all I know is what it isn’t! But to know what something is we need to know what it actually is; not what it isn’t.

Well, what are some other common terms for immaterial? How about “Non-physical,” “incorporeal,” and “supernatural.” See the problem? These mean “not physical,” “not bodily,” and “beyond nature.” Again, these are all terms that describe what it is not, but I want to know what it is.

Some people use analogies to describe immateriality. Let’s try that! People say immateriality is like electricity. But electricity is not immaterial, it’s a process requiring matter. Requiring a conductor be it a wire, molecules of air or water, etc. It can be measured in several ways. We even know what it is! Currents of charged particles traveling through a conductor of a completed circuit. It produces light, heat, and a magnetic field that can produce work. All Measurable. Electricity is not a good analogy for immateriality. With electricity, we know what makes electricity and we know what the output of electrical systems is.

Immateriality can’t be measured and we know of nothing that makes immateriality. Trying to attribute any properties to something immaterial just can’t be done. You can try to Imagine immaterial properties, but all you can actually do is imagine something physical and pretend that it is not physical. You can’t conceive of immateriality because there’s nothing to conceive of.

Others use air, as an analogy for immateriality. Here again, air is made up of matter. It is a layer of gasses containing several elements. It is not immaterial it is material. Scientists now find even the space within atoms is not empty space. These examples are not analogies, they are opposites. Okay, so when we think of immateriality, we have to say it is “not fill in the blank.” Not physical, not material, not liquid or gas, it’s simply put not...everything; actually, nonexistence. To say that “immateriality exists” is the same as saying that “nonexistence exists.” That is a contradiction of terms. Like non-water is water. In other words, the very meaning of the word “immateriality” is the same as “non-existence.” I mean, if you were going to try to describe something that doesn’t exist, you’d describe it as having absolutely no physical properties whatsoever, because that’s what it means for something to not exist.

Do you see where we’re at? If immateriality is nonexistence, then immateriality cannot exist. So, back to the argument.

If immateriality (non-matter) does not exist, then materialism is true.

Immateriality does not exist.

Therefore, materialism (the belief that all that exists is made up of matter) is true.

In the pursuit of truth, we need to understand the physical realities all around us and we need a method for that pursuit. Believing or not believing in materialism shapes how we think and the decisions we make. When we understand that materialism is true we will base our thoughts and decisions on evidence. We will use the scientific method for inquiry and experimentation. We can always ask the question: Does that claim match material reality? This leads us right into the next video where we will discuss that truth matches material reality.

Thank you for watching.

And remember: Materialism is important because $\hat{?}$? Truth Matters!