

1 : VALUES.

What do YOU think is valuable ?

NOT material things. (Why not ? - no intrinsic value - must relate to people's emotions.
"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder".)

Examples : Happiness, fame, honesty, experience

Everybody thinks something is valuable. Don't they ?

WHY do you think it's valuable ?

- does people good
- avoids crime

So THOSE properties (doing good, avoiding crime ...) are valuable too. More, less, equally ?

WHY do you think that *the properties* are valuable ?

The answer doesn't matter much. The principle does : you can keep on asking "Why ?"
until what ?

One of these propositions must be true (because they exhaust the possibilities) :

- 1 : There are (or, at least, you can identify) an infinite number of valuable things.
- 2 : You start going round in a loop (or you're inconsistent, which we'll ignore, because it doesn't really change the argument).
- 3 : There are some things that just *are* important, and you can't say why.

Answers to the propositions :

- 1 : I don't believe it.
- 2 : So there's no real reason to think that anything is valuable ? You've been deceiving yourself.
- 3 : Which leaves this one. Now we're getting somewhere.

CAN YOU PUT IT IN OTHER WORDS ? - sometimes helps to clarify thoughts, even if it doesn't get you any further with the argument.

- some things mean a lot to me.
- life wouldn't be as good without them.

So it's all a matter of YOUR FEELINGS. You *feel* that there are values, that some values are important, the certain things are valuable.

You're not surprised ? You wonder what all the fuss is about ?

The fuss is that some people - perhaps not you - believe that things are important for deep philosophical reasons, which come down to just what we've been saying. The deep philosophical reasons turn out to be feelings without any rational basis.

Read any newspaper correspondence column, listen to any radio talkback programme. Most of them are full of statements that something *should* be done, or that people *should* do this, or that you *should* be made to do something else. Only very rarely are you told why these things *should* be - and when you are it commonly turns out to be the same thing again.

So what it usually means is that I (or someone else, or a few other people) feel that it would be nice if something happens, or someone (often someone else) does something, or is made to do something. These are (or, at least, we feel that these are) much less impressive statements.

So if it's just your feeling

- why should I care ?
- you might change your mind tomorrow, so there's nothing particularly significant about it.
- it's worth no more than my feelings.
- what's happened to the value we began with ?

ARE THERE ANY REAL, PERMANENT, SOLID VALUES ?

If there are, they can't be based on us.

What other potential bases have we ?

Natural values, built into the universe ? -

(Seems to be a common assumption.)

Built in how ? Why ?

No evidence. (But none for anything else either.)

Anyway, so what ? Why should we take any notice of them ?

Science ? - leads to no values.

Religion ? - the classical answer (which doesn't make it wrong).

Values come from some being greater than us - God.

Or from something else (Buddhists - how do they manage ?).
But in any case from "outside".

That solves the problem, if you can believe it. But can you ?

So, again - ARE THERE ANY REAL, PERMANENT, SOLID VALUES ?

No answer.

But we don't usually let that stop us. Compare :

IS THE UNIVERSE A SIMPLE, ORDERLY, MECHANICAL SYSTEM ?

There's no answer to that either if we just sit and think. But we didn't just sit and think.

(Though it did take us very many millennia to get round to it.)

We can still try to make progress by making some assumptions and testing them. If the assumptions are *wrong*, we might find cases where they lead to predictions that just don't happen - then by reductio ad absurdum, we can refute the false assumption. At least that gives us in principle a way to eliminate false notions - though it might not be so easy in practice.

(But it doesn't give us a way to demonstrate that any assumption is *true*, because even if it gives correct predictions it might just happen to fit the "real" explanation's prediction by accident.)

And that's science.

Why can't we do the same with religion ?

We can.

What assumptions shall we make ?

How did the scientists start ?

They made the assumption that

THE UNIVERSE IS A SIMPLE, ORDERLY, MECHANICAL SYSTEM,

and went on from there.

What happens if we assume that

THERE ARE REAL, PERMANENT, SOLID VALUES ?

We've already worked out where that leads us - the values must come FROM OUTSIDE.

But we've also worked out that values can't stand on their own; if something is valuable, it has to be valuable to somebody.

- so who is the somebody outside whose values are so important that we can accept them as real, permanent, and solid ?

Guess ?

THE NEXT HYPOTHESIS seems to be that there is a "somebody" of immense importance outside our commonplace world.

Let's call the somebody GOD.