

“Doubts about God”

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Introduction

- A. God? The biggest question of all.
- B. The Christian claim: A personal, all-powerful, loving, eternally-existing God created the universe, including life, and is seeking to save humanity from its sinful condition by the righteousness of His incarnate Son made available through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Alternative worldviews regarding God (see section III.C. in the “Room for Doubt—Reason for Hope” outline).
- D. Key considerations
 - 1. **Ontology** (cosmology): Why/How does the universe (matter/energy) exist?
 - 2. **Teleology**: Why/How are things “just right” for human existence?
 - 3. **Biology**: How did life originate in this universe?
 - 4. **Anthropology**: How can we explain the origin and capacities of humanity?
- E. How can we evaluate these competing claims?
 - 1. Comprehensive
 - 2. Cumulative
 - 3. Comparative

Gen 1:1 “In the beginning, God created ...”

Ps 19:1-2 “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.”¹

Rom 1:20 “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

- 4. No specific argument in the Bible to “PROVE” God’s existence.
- 5. But God’s actions in history point to His existence, His righteousness, and His love.
- 6. The Bible affirms that nature points us to God.

I. Ontology: Why/How does the universe exist? (“ontology” < *ontos* [being])

A. Christian claims:

- 1. God brought the universe into existence.

¹ See my seminary sermon and slides on Psalm 19 at the following web address:

http://www.worldvieweyes.org/videos/Ps-19-R_Knopp-640.mov.

2. The universe is not eternal, self-explanatory, or self-sufficient.

B. Two important cosmological arguments (*cosmos* = nature; world; universe):

1. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and his “Five Ways” to prove God’s existence.²
 - a. Assumed, for the sake of argument, that the universe was eternal.
 - b. E.g. Motion:
 - (1) Whatever moves must be moved by another.
 - (2) But the chain cannot go infinitely.
 - (3) Must be some uncaused, unmoved Mover.
2. Kalam version (*kalam* = Arabic for “speech”)³
 - a. P1: Everything that begins to exist must have a cause.
 - b. P2: The universe began to exist. (Uses Big Bang cosmology to support this.)
 - c. Conclusion: Therefore, the universe must have a cause.

C. Modern cosmology’s **Big Bang affirms a temporal beginning to the universe.**

1. 19th – early 20th century: universe widely held to be eternal by many.
2. “Big Bang” idea **surfaces**.
 - a. Einstein’s general theory of relativity (1916) implied either an expanding or contracting universe.
 - b. Georges Lemaitre (1927): Gave mathematical calculations for an expanding universe.

Sir Arthur Eddington: “Religion first became possible for a reasonable man of science in the year 1927.”

- c. Edwin Hubble
 - (1) 1924: Observed other galaxies.
 - (2) 1929: The “cosmic Doppler” effect: the universe is _____ **EXPANDING**
3. Big Bang idea is **suppressed**.
 - a. Arthur Eddington, British astrophysicist, wrote, “Philosophically, the notion of a beginning of the present order of Nature is repugnant to me.... I should like to find a genuine loophole.”
 - b. Fred Hoyle rejected the Big Bang idea primarily because the “big bang theory requires a recent origin of the Universe that openly invites the concept of creation” (*The Intelligent Universe*, p. 237).
 - c. Einstein contrived a “cosmological constant” to make the universe “static” and avoid an expanding universe. (He later admitted that this was his “biggest blunder.”)
4. Big Bang idea eventually **succeeds**.
 - a. 1965 Arno Pensias & Robert Wilson: Unexpectedly discovered “background radiation” throughout the universe.
 - b. Subsequent COBE (Cosmic Background Explorer) satellites confirm Big Bang models.

D. Impact on scientists (including atheists and skeptics).

- “What we found is evidence for the birth of the universe.... It’s like looking at God” (George Smoot, COBE project leader).
- “It is the discovery of the century, if not of all time” (Stephen Hawking, Cambridge University).
- “We have found the Holy Grail of cosmology” (Michael Turner, University of Chicago).
- “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as

² See <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1002.htm>, *Summa Theologica*, especially Article 3.

³ This argument is prominently used by William Lane Craig, a leading Christian philosopher and apologist. See his website at www.reasonablefaith.org.

he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries” (Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 116).

E. Apologetic significance of the BIG BANG

1. The universe _____ **BEGAN** (cf. biblical creation).
2. The Naturalist’s (non-theist’s) major challenge: Began FROM WHAT and HOW (if there was “nothing”)?
3. The Naturalist’s alternatives:
 - a. Oscillating universe. (Repeated “big bangs” with ongoing expansion/collapse)
 - b. Infinite universes exist. (We live in a “multiverse.”)
 - c. Universe is simply “uncaused”; it just “happened”; things can come “from nothing” and for “no reason.”
4. Naturalist’s claims:

Alex Rosenberg: “A hundred years ago, it became clear that most events at the level of the subatomic are random, uncaused, indeterministic quantum events— merely matters of probability.... Since the big bang is just such a quantum event, it, too, is a wholly indeterministic one. It is an event that just springs up out of the multiverse’s foam of universes without any cause at all. Why is there a universe at all? No reason at all. Why is there a multiverse in which universes pop into existence for no reason at all? No reason at all! It’s just another quantum event. What science and scientism tell those who hanker for more is “Get over it!” Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist’s Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions* (pp. 38-39). New York: Norton, Kindle Edition, Location 38-39. ⁴

Stephen Hawking: “Bodies such as stars or black holes cannot just appear out of nothing. But a whole universe can.... Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing ... Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going” (*The Grand Design* [New York: Random House, 2010], 180).

5. Note the apostle Paul’s significant claims in Romans 1:18-32.
 - a. Humans have a SENSE of God.
 - b. Many SUPPRESS this awareness.
 - c. They SPECULATE alternatives.
 - d. They SUBSTITUTE some replacement for the real thing (God).

II. Teleology: Why/How are Things “Just Right” for Human Existence? (“teleology” < telos = end; purpose; design)

A. Classic teleological considerations (e.g. William Paley, 1743-1805)

1. Argument from design
2. E.g. A discovered watch in the forest.

B. The “Anthropic” Principle (*anthropos* = man)

1. Numerous physical constants and the ratios among them are amazingly precise to make the existence of human life possible.
2. Or, without this “fine-tuning” of these numerical values, human life could never exist.
3. The universe began _____ . **JUST RIGHT**
4. How do we explain this?

⁴ Also see the debate between Alex Rosenberg and the Christian philosopher, William Lane Craig at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhfkhq-CM84>.

C. Examples of the Anthropic Principle.⁵

1. Expansion rate of universe “must be fine-tuned to an accuracy of one part in 10^{55} ” (Hugh Ross, in Moreland’s *The Creation Hypothesis*, p. 163).
2. The ratio of proton mass to electron mass (1,836 times heavier).
3. Ratio of number of electrons to number of proton:
 - a. Must be accurate to 1 in 10^{37} power.
 - b. Hugh Ross illustration of coins to the moon (see Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, p. 109).
4. Strength of gravity in relation to other primary forces. (See Robin Collins in Strobel’s *Case for a Creator*, pp. 131-132.)

D. Impact on “non-creationists”

Fred Hoyle (agnostic/atheist): “A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect as monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”

Stephen Hawking: “The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers [e.g. ratio of proton to electron mass] seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life” (*A Brief History of Time*, p. 125).

Arno Penzias (Nobel in physics): “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say ‘supernatural’) plan” (quoted in Margenau and Varghese, eds., *Cosmos, Bios, and Theos*, p. 83).

George Greenstein (Astrophysicist at Amherst College): “As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some super-natural agency—or, rather, Agency—must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?” (*The Symbiotic Universe*, p. 27). [Note: Greenstein admits that the “theistic hypothesis” seems to be the most sensible, but he rejects it because he asserts that “God is not an explanation” (p. 28)].

Antony Flew (at age of 81 converted from atheism to theism. He had “to go where the evidence leads”): “I think the most impressive arguments for God’s existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries....” “I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe’s intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God” (*There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, p. 88).

E. Biblical connections (Ps 19:1-2; Rom 1:20; Isa 45:18)

Isa 45:18 “For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited)” (NASV).

III. Biology: How Did Life Originate in this Universe?

A. Naturalism’s claim:

1. Life arose through blind, undirected, non-intelligent natural forces and random chance.

Richard Dawkins (atheist and evolutionary biologist at Oxford): “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose” (*The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 1)

2. Charles Darwin (and neo-Darwinism) does not address or explain the origin of life. Life must already exist for natural selection to have anything to act on.

B. The origin of life requires:

⁵ For introductory explanations, see Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*; J.P. Moreland, ed., *The Creation Hypothesis*; Hugh Ross, *Fingerprint of God*; John Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?*, 71-77; Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards, *The Privileged Planet* (which is also available on DVD).

1. The right **materials** (i.e., 20 amino acids).
2. The right **sequencing** of the materials to form proteins.
3. **Information** (and a communication system) to direct the process of sequencing (e.g. DNA).
4. DNA specifies the order of very complex sequences of amino acids and proteins.
5. This is “complex specified information” (CSI).

C. The Naturalists’ main challenges:

1. Dilemma: Existing information (DNA) is necessary for life; but existing life is necessary for DNA.
2. How did the information originate?
3. Purely naturalistic processes cannot generate CSI (Complex Specified Information).

D. The wonders of the DNA molecule: A “signature” of intelligence?

1. One gram of DNA can store 700 terabytes of data (= 14,000 fifty-gigabyte Blu-ray discs!)
2. Four “bases”: A,G,C,T (3 billion pairs in humans).
3. A “triplet” of three consecutive bases gives the code for each specific amino acid to form a protein.
4. 20 different amino acids are thereby “instructed” to form proteins (from 40-27,000 amino acids for ONE protein).
5. Even “simple” organisms have many proteins (e.g. E. coli has 4,300 proteins).
6. Each human cell has DNA. If stretched out, a human’s DNA would reach _____ **613** BILLION miles.

E. Acknowledgment from skeptics and atheists.

1. **Francis Crick** (co-discoverer of the DNA molecule): “An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have been satisfied to get it going” (*Life Itself*, p. 88).
2. **Fred Hoyle**: “Life could not have originated here on the Earth. Nor does it look as though biological evolution can be explained from within an earthbound theory of life. Genes from outside the Earth are needed to drive the evolutionary process. This much can be consolidated by strictly scientific means, by experiment, observation and calculation” (*The Intelligent Universe*, p. 242]
 - a. Estimated the chances of life originating on earth: 1 in 10 to the _____ **40,000th** power!
 - b. Number of estimated atoms in the visible universe: 10 to the _____ **80th** power.
 - c. “Panspermia Hypothesis”: Life came to earth from elsewhere in the universe.
3. **Richard Dawkins’** “admission”: A “signature?!” (See the interview segment with Richard Dawkins in the movie “Expelled” with Ben Stein.)

IV. Anthropology: How Can We Explain the Origin and Characteristics of Humanity?

A. Biblical creationist claims

1. Humans created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:26-27).
2. A unique “self” exists and is not fully reducible to mere matter in motion.
3. Self-awareness and self-determination (i.e., human freedom).

4. Inherent personal meaning and value.
5. A moral sense (of right/wrong).
6. A basis and obligation for universal ethical principles, including social concern and justice (Titus 3:8; Gal 6:9-10; Matt 6:1-3; Jm 2:1-9; I Tim 5:8).
7. Humans can sufficiently comprehend the world and have adequate knowledge of it (Gen 1:26-28).

Albert Einstein: “The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible” (*Einstein: A Biography* (1954) by Antonina Vallentin, p. 24).

8. Meaningful relationships are both possible and enjoined (e.g. family, church, community, world).

B. Competing worldviews

1. For many other worldviews: There is NO “self” (e.g. Buddhism, pure Naturalism)
2. Freedom is an illusion.

Alex Rosenberg (philosopher, Duke University): “The notion of free will helps itself to a self to do the willing. Now that we see that the self is an illusion, it should be easier to give up the notion that the self is free.... This notion of free will or freedom as autonomy—self-rule—has a long pedigree in European philosophy that runs back through Kant, the philosopher who could not see Darwin coming. It’s not going to take scientism any longer to dispose of this theory than the others.” Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist’s Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions* (New York: Norton, 2011), Kindle Edition, 238.

Will Provine (Professor, Evolutionary Biology, Cornell University): “There’s no human free will. If you believe in evolution, you can’t hope for there being any free will. There’s no hope whatsoever of there being any deep meaning in human life. We live; we die; and we’re gone.” (Cited from video interview, “Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed” with Ben Stein)

3. No ultimate basis for human meaning or value. (See quote from Rosenberg in Section I above)
 - a. E.g. The Nihilists rightly recognize that, without God, nothing has value.
 - b. E.g. If Pantheists consistently applied karma and reincarnation, human value would be determined by a previous life. Why help someone if they deserve to be where they are?
4. Re: Knowledge
 - a. Naturalistic worldviews cannot justify the very use of human reason to give us “truth.” (Why trust reason to give us truth if it’s the mere produce of law and chance?)
 - b. Pantheistic worldviews emphasize the deceptive character of reason and our physical senses.

Conclusion

A. Criteria for evaluating competing claims

1. Comprehensive
2. Cumulative
3. Comparative

B. “Pointers” to God