

TWO CLASSIC ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Dub McClish

Introduction

Only two possible positions exist relative to the existence of God: Either He does or He does not exist. In referring to God, I refer not to some sort of demigod or “a god” among many other “gods.” Rather, I refer to Deity Who is the Almighty, flawless and perfect in His nature, and Who is the Creator of all things.

The absolutely fundamental issue to Christians is belief in God. Christians know that He has revealed Himself in His created universe (general revelation, Ps. 19:1–4; Rom. 1:19–20) and in His Word (special revelation, Jn. 20:30–31).

In the very nature of the case, Christians **must** believe in God: “And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him” (Heb. 11:6). A few years ago someone with a straight face called himself a “Christian Agnostic.” That is as close as he came to being one, for no such creature exists. One may as well speak of a “Nazi Communist” or a “believing infidel.” Christians believe in God. If one does not believe in God, he is not a Christian, regardless of what he calls himself (even if he teaches in a theological seminary or is the Archbishop of Canterbury).

Millions of otherwise enlightened folk deny the existence of God all of their lives, but **only** as long as they live. Atheists claim that His existence cannot be “proved.” If by *proved* they mean as one would run tests in a laboratory or measure the square footage of a building, they are correct. In other words, we cannot **empirically** “prove” He exists by means of our physical senses. Without question, empirical evidence is helpful when establishing a proposition. However, there are other ways of demonstrating proof of a matter. We will examine three of the several arguments Christians have at their disposal that are adequate to prove the existence of God to those who will consider them without irrational bias. We will survey only two of these arguments in this chapter: The cosmological and teleological arguments.

The Bible begins with the majestic words, “In the beginning, God...” (Gen. 1:1).¹ Our first impulse as Christians is simply to turn to the Bible and its innumerable declarations of the existence of God for proof. Even the atheist cannot deny that the Bible does everywhere declare God. But as plausible as it is for us to believe in God because of the Bible, this is not sufficient for millions of people who do not believe. They do not believe the Bible to be God’s Word. Indeed, they cannot accept a book as the product of God while denying the existence of God. The believer engages in circular reasoning (which is no reasoning at all) to say that he believes in God because he believes what the Bible says about Him, and then argue that the Bible is the Word of God because God says it is. Of course, this is not to deny that powerful arguments **can** be made based on the transcendent contents and characteristics of the Bible (e.g., its harmony, prophetic fulfillment, miracles, ethics, et al.), none of which mere men could have produced.

When we discuss the existence of God with an atheist, we must therefore appeal to some sort of evidence and proof besides the Bible itself. The arguments we will study in this chapter are some of the avenues of appeal that we may use.

The Cosmological Argument

Definitions

The Greek noun *cosmos* refers to order, and then, by extension to the universe or the world as an orderly whole. *Cosmology* is defined as “the branch of philosophy dealing with the origin and general structure of the universe, with its parts, elements, and laws, and esp. with such of its characteristics as space, time, causality, and freedom.”² Of special relevance to the “cosmological argument” in this definition is the word *causality*. The cosmological argument is often called “the first cause argument,” for it seeks the answer to the question concerning who or what caused the cosmos—the universe.

Historical Background

Before considering the cosmological argument, we need to give attention to a precedent argument that lies beneath it. The cosmological argument is based upon a broader argument philosophers and scientists have pondered and recognized for centuries. The most famous and significant

of these was the inspired “philosopher” (whom I believe to be the apostle Paul) who wrote the letter to the Hebrews. He set forth the simple, sweeping cause-effect argument upon which the cosmological argument rests: “For every house is builded by some one...” (Heb. 3:4a).

The Cause-Effect Argument

The simplest form of the cause-effect argument (also known as “the law of causality”) is found in the preceding Scriptural declaration. It is evident that the writer is stating an axiomatic principle that stands on its own without need of proof; what he says is true about **every** house. This principle reaches far beyond house building, however; so the “house” in this verse serves as a figure representing all other created things. Just as every house (the effect) has a builder (the cause), so does every other effect (both animate and inanimate) have a cause behind it.³ This broad principle innately implies at least the following corollaries, all of which are as self-evident and axiomatic as the principle itself:

1. The cause is more honorable than the effect (v. 3). This principle is true not only of houses, but of automobiles, violins, books, computers, and every other morally neutral item anyone can name. The mind, skill, and effort one expends in causing an automobile to roll off the assembly line is worthy of far more honor than the car itself, even if we admire it greatly and it costs \$50,000. Henry Morris made this point: “An effect can be lower than its cause, but never higher.”⁴
2. The cause must be greater than the effect. Morris stated this implication as follows: “No effect is ever quantitatively ‘greater’ nor qualitatively ‘superior’ to its cause.”⁵
3. The cause must be antecedent to the effect. It is a physical and logical impossibility for a house or anything else to be built twenty years before its builder is born.
4. The cause must be adequate and sufficient to produce the effect. If I said a two-year old boy built the house I live in, I would be suggesting a cause, but hardly an adequate or sufficient one.
5. The terms *cause* and *effect* are “Siamese twin” concepts—inseparable in thought and expression. R.C. Sproul expressed this implication well:

It is meaningless to say that something is a **cause** if it yields no **effect**. It is likewise meaningless to say that something is an **effect** if it has no **cause**. A cause, by definition, must have an effect, or it is not a cause [and vice versa, DM].⁶

As indicated above, the cosmological argument flows from the law of causality. The **ultimate** cause-effect question relates to the origin of the universe itself. One would have to be a “mad scientist” and “live in another world” to deny that this world/universe exists. As surely as it exists (a fact which atheists readily admit), its existence must have some explanation. Only two possibilities can be postulated for the way it came to be: (1) The universe is eternal—it did not have a beginning (which, of course, means that it never “came to be”) or (2) the universe in some way and at some time had a beginning point.

Amazingly, some atheists have tried to avoid the inevitable unpleasant implications they must deal with concerning both the origin and end of the universe by arguing that it had no beginning and will have no end—it is eternal. Essentially, this is another way of saying that the universe is a **cause** rather than an **effect**. It is also an implicit denial that the universe is material, for, by definition, all material things are ultimately effects that have been caused.

Further, this theory implies that the universe is spiritual in nature. There are only two possible natures of which all things known to man consist—material (matter) and spiritual (mind). To be eternal, therefore, the universe **must** be spiritual in the nature of the case. If it is not spiritual, it **cannot** be eternal, for only spiritual entities can partake of eternity and immortality. All material things are temporary. Thus the eternal-universe concept denies the essential respective definitions of *material* and *spiritual*. One may as well confer an innately “spiritual” nature on a Chevrolet pickup as to do so on the universe. Such claims demonstrate idiocy gone to seed, but desperate men are driven to these depths in their denials of God.

The suggestion that anything material—the universe—has always been and will always be contradicts one of the bedrock axioms of science—variously called the “second law of thermodynamics” or the “law of energy decay.” As *thermodynamics* implies, this law concerns the relationship between heat

and energy and the conversion of one into another. *The law of energy decay* states its meaning, namely, that with the employment of energy there is a corresponding depletion of available usable energy—a process scientists call “entropy.”

Simply put, our universe is wearing out or running down. This could not be so if the universe were eternal/spiritual in its nature. Can one live a day and not see the evidence of such entropy on every hand? Natural resources are being depleted (though we reject the alarming rate the extremist environmentalists claim), all things wear out, and death and decay are visible on every hand. Such things are not compatible with a spiritual entity or an eternal universe.

No scientist would ever have even thought of such a thing as an “eternal universe,” much less pretended to advocate it seriously, had he not begun with blind bias for evolution and against creation and God. When men begin with an a priori assumption that rules out creation by a transcendent Cause (i.e., God), we should not be surprised at their flights of fancy and imagination. Where else can they go? What else can they do? Paul describes just such men who we suppose have been present in every age:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:18–22).

The famous astrophysicist, Robert Jastrow (certainly no “creationist”), has been driven by the evidence (as apparently other scientists have) to give up on the “eternal universe” postulation, as the following statements indicate:

Only as a result of the most recent discoveries can we say with a fair degree of confidence that the world has not existed forever; that it began abruptly, without apparent

cause, in a blinding event that defies scientific explanation.... Modern science denies an eternal existence to the Universe, either in the past or in the future.⁷

He would have learned all of this much earlier had he simply read the first chapter of Genesis.

The fact that the universe is running down carries an inescapable implication concerning its origin—that it had a beginning. Don England, in the context of discussing the first and second laws of thermodynamics, thus stated the implication: “In other words, the total universe exhibits the appearance of a clock running down, thus implying that it was once “**wound up**” or set in motion.”⁸

Not only does the second law of thermodynamics deny the possibility of an eternal universe, but this law also clashes head-on with a fundamental tenet of evolutionary theory. The “gospel” of evolution alleges that the universe is constantly improving, moving from disorder to order, and increasing in complexity.

Morris well summarized this point:

The entropy principle involves a continual **decrease** of order, of organization, of size, of complexity. It seems axiomatic that both [i.e., evolution and entropy, DM] cannot possibly be true. But there is no question whatever that the second law of thermodynamics is true!⁹

Morris correctly observed that sensational theories, adopted by zealots in an effort to justify their evolutionary and anti-God prejudice, “...are philosophical speculations, not science, secondary assumptions to avoid the contradictions implicit in the evolutionary model.”¹⁰

The Cosmological Argument

Both evidence and reason demonstrate the truth of the premise that the universe is material rather than eternal and that it therefore had a point of origin or beginning. The ground is now prepared for us to narrow the broader cause-effect argument to the cosmological or first-cause argument. I have found no better statement of it in formal logical terms than that of William Lane Craig:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.

2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.¹¹

As seen from Jastrow's statement, even atheistic and agnostic scientists have generally conceded the first and second premises of the foregoing syllogism, demanding the conclusion of causality (which, of course, believers in God and the Bible have known all along—Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1–4; et al.).

Since the universe is not an eternal **cause**, but a material **effect** of a cause, what or who caused it? Only three possibilities present themselves:

1. The universe is the result of accident or chance
2. The universe created itself
3. The universe has a creator transcendent to and apart from itself

The “accident/chance” claim: Could the universe have originated from some accident or chance occurrence? To ask is to answer. Not even a lowly paperclip “just happens” or results from some sort of “accident.” The universe is an effect that demands an **adequate** cause, as do all effects. If “accident” and “chance” do not qualify as adequate causes for even a paper clip, how much less for the universe? Yet agnostics, atheists, humanists, and evolutionists have little better to offer in their denial of God and creation. How can rational men gullibly believe, much less advocate, such irrational ideas?

The “self-created” claim: Could the universe have created itself? Julie Andrews, playing Maria in the musical, “The Sound of Music,” sang one song in which the following words occurred: “Nothing comes from nothing; nothing ever could.” Her songwriter was apparently not an evolutionist or he could not have thus written. Incredibly, those who advocate the self-creation of the universe implicitly attribute the creative power of Godhood to mindless matter (albeit God is eternal and **did not** create Himself). Granting that somehow the universe had the ability (power and mind) to create itself, then it had to exist before it existed, create before it was created, and act before it was capable of acting.

Just as the second law of thermodynamics falsifies the idea of an **eternal** universe, the first law of thermodynamics falsifies the theory of a **self-created** universe. The latter law has to do with the

conservation of energy and matter and states that neither can either be created or destroyed. While their forms may change, their levels remain constant. Dr. Jastrow (not a creationist, remember) has explained why self-creation and this axiomatic and universally-accepted law are incompatible:

But the creation of matter out of nothing would violate a cherished concept in science—the principle of the conservation of matter and energy—which states that matter and energy can be neither created nor destroyed. Matter can be converted into energy, and vice versa, but the total amount of all matter and energy in the Universe must remain unchanged forever. It is difficult to accept a theory that violates such a firmly established scientific fact.¹²

I agree with Bert Thompson's evaluation of the self-created posit: "The Universe did not create itself. Such an idea is absurd, both philosophically and scientifically."¹³

The creation claim: Was the universe created by an objective, transcendent Cause? This explanation is the last of the three possibilities and the only one left standing. We have seen that the universe is not eternal, thus it had a beginning. We have further seen that it could not have begun by some incredible astrophysical "accident" or by self-creation. Thus the only remaining possibility to explain the origin of the universe is that it was created by some Cause. What are the implications of this conclusion concerning the attributes of this creator/cause?

1. He must have existed before the universe in order to be able to create it.
2. He must be eternal, for He could no more create Himself than He could create the universe. He must therefore be the one uncaused Cause.
3. He must be pure spirit/mind, for no material creature is self-existent or eternal.
4. He must be transcendent to and apart from the effect of His creation.
5. He must be omniscient and omni-wise. He must know everything about everything without beginning or ending and have the wisdom to use His knowledge perfectly in order to produce the effect that can be seen in only the small fraction of the universe mankind has been able to view.

6. He must be omnipotent so as to be able to use His knowledge and wisdom to create the universe out of nothing.

7. His attributes must be such that He is adequate to produce the effect we know as “the universe.”

The Bible reveals to us Jehovah God Who is possessed of all of these attributes:

1. The opening words of the Bible, “In the beginning, God...” (Gen. 1:1a) tell us that Jehovah God was there before/when He began creating the universe.
2. The Bible constantly attributes eternal nature to God (Dt. 33:27; Ps. 41:13; 93:2; Isa. 4:28; Jn. 5:26; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 10:6; et al.).
3. God is pure spirit and self-existent (Jn. 4:23–24; Acts 17:24, 29; 2 Cor. 3:17).
4. God is transcendent and apart from that which He created (2 Sam. 7:18–19; 1 Kg. 8:27; Is. 55:8–9). (Of course, He is not “apart from” those who are in fellowship with Him [1 Jn. 1:6–7]).
5. God knows all and understands all (1 Kg. 8:39; Job 12:13; 28:10; Ps. 104:24; 139:1–16; Pr. 3:19; Is. 40:13–14; Rom. 11:33–34; Heb. 4:13).
6. God is all-powerful and is not restrained by anyone or anything except His own will (Gen. 1:3; 1 Sam. 14:6; Ps. 65:6; 135:6; Is. 50:2; Jer. 10:6, 12; Dan, 4:35; Mt. 3:9; Rom. 1:20; Eph. 3:20).
7. All of the above demonstrate that God, as revealed in the Bible, is adequate to cause the effect we know as “the universe.”

The Bible makes known to us the only Being capable of satisfying the demands of the First Cause for our universe.

The Teleological Argument

Definitions

The Greek noun, *teleios*, has to do with bringing something to completion—that which is complete as opposed to partial. Our English word, *teleology*, is “the study of the evidences of design or purpose in nature.”¹⁴

Historical Notes

As with the cosmological argument, inspired writers employ this argument: Perhaps a millennium before the Lord came, David argued the existence of God on the basis of the order of His creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3). Paul also makes this argument: “For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). In more modern times, perhaps the most famous advocate of this argument was the nineteenth-century English philosopher and theologian, William Paley.

The Argument Itself

In his book, *Natural Theology*, Paley begins by telling a hypothetical story of finding a watch on the ground.¹⁵ He proceeds to state the implication that, upon examining its various parts and the way they were all fashioned so as to work as one to tell time, these features all point to a designer, even though the finder was not present when the watch was fashioned and he had never met the designer. After eleven pages of stating the argument from design, Paley then spends the balance of his sizeable book applying it to various demonstrations of design in the natural world that argue the existence of the Master Designer, God.

The “teleological argument” is therefore “the argument for the existence of God based on the assumption that order in the universe implies an orderer and cannot be a natural feature of the universe.”¹⁶ It argues that purposeful design implies a designer. Perhaps the more common name for this argument is “the argument from design.” It argues not only design, but purposeful design

Wayne Jackson states the argument in syllogistic form as follows:

1. If the Universe evinces purposeful design, there must have been a Designer.
2. The Universe does evince purposeful design.
3. Thus, the Universe must have had a Designer.¹⁷

Atheistic philosophers concede the conclusion of this argument as axiomatic, based upon the premises as stated. Since in their evolutionary world-view they reject the implication of the conclusion a priori, they must overturn one or both of the premises upon which it stands. They therefore attack the argument by denying the truth of the minor (second) premise. They counter that at least some things in the universe evince non-design, from which assertion they incorrectly deduce they have “proved” that there is no Designer. However, as Jackson points out, theists “are not obligated to show **obvious** design in every single feature of the Universe.”¹⁸ A reasonable number of such cases will establish the case for a Designer. Morris makes an observation on this point worth considering:

Admittedly, it may be difficult at this stage of inquiry to comprehend the Creator’s purpose in making pulsars or spiral nebulae or dinosaurs or bed-bugs. We can make “reasoned guesses,” however, and such guesses are **no less scientific** than the guesses that others make about the imagined evolutionary development of pulsars, spiral nebulae, dinosaurs, and bed-bugs. At least the concept of an omnipotent, purposive Creator provides an adequate Cause to produce these and all other observable effects in the universe, whereas random matter does not.¹⁹

Some objects may actually possess design and purpose that an observer has not discovered. Atheists may sometimes argue against lack of design in a given part of the universe merely out of their own ignorance, imperception, or even bias. Additionally, an object that once evinced purposeful design may have lost it through entropy, per the second law of thermodynamics.

To what do atheists attribute the mathematically precise and absolutely reliable functioning of our universe? The precision is so absolute that scientists landed men on the moon within a few feet of where they intended. The same precision has allowed scientists to launch several photographic probes to Mars since the 1970s, climaxed by placing wheeled robotic vehicles on its surface early this year. Does not such precision argue design and a Designer?

The changing of the seasons, the life in the seed, the exact tilt of the earth on its axis, the precise distance between the earth and the sun, and ten thousand other such evidences shout “design” and imply only one Designer capable of producing it all.

Atheists admit that the human body may be the most amazing element of the universe. They are willing to describe its various systems, brain, organs, cellular construction, and such like in the most glowing and awe-struck terms. Then they credit the **cause** all of this spectacular **effect** to blind chance and a favorable roll of the cosmic dice. No design? No purpose? As long as they are permitted to define *design* and *purpose*, one can rest assured that God-hating evolutionists will never find any. They are quite willing to give their mythical “Mother Nature” all of the credit while denying even the existence of their actual Cause—God the Father.

Perhaps we should attempt to help the atheists with their blindness to purpose by suggesting some purposes that may not have occurred to them. Wayne Jackson lists the following:

1. A **theological** purpose—to demonstrate to us the power of God: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).
2. An **aesthetic** purpose—to delight and please us, as do the vast canopy of stars, the indescribable sunrises and sunsets, the lovely rainbows, and a host of other beautiful things of our universe: “O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: The earth is full of thy riches” (104:24).
3. A **psychological** purpose—to cause us to bow in humility when we reflect on the glories of God’s cosmic creation, as did David: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (8:3–4).²⁰

It is incredible that men can marvel at the order, precision, and beauty in even the small percentage of the vast universe we have been able to explore and still profess to see no demonstration of purposeful design. One is tempted to wonder if they live in a universe the rest of us have not discovered!

The evidence for a transcendent Designer of the universe is literally staggering. There is One, and only One, Who is adequate to design and Cause our universe, the God described in our Bibles. He is “not the author of confusion...,” but of things “done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

Conclusion

We have given very brief attention to only three of the several powerful arguments concerning the existence of God.

1. The cosmological argument: Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence; The universe began to exist; Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.
2. The teleological argument: If the Universe evinces purposeful design, there must have been a Designer; The Universe does evince purposeful design; Thus, the Universe must have had a Designer.

Both of these and other strong arguments complement each other so as to constitute an insurmountable case for the existence of God. Little wonder, then, that David wrote: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1a).

Endnotes

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

² *Random House College Dictionary*, p. 303.

³ To affirm merely that every effect must have a cause is too broad a statement. The atheist quickly responds by asking “Who or what caused God?” What the atheist cannot accept is that Innate to the concept of Deity/God is that He is uncaused and uncausable—He is not an effect. However, the cause-effect argument is correctly and precisely qualified by stating that every **finite, material, or contingent** (that which is incapable of causing itself) effect must have a cause adequate to produce it.

⁴ Henry M. Morris, *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Pub., 1975 reprint), p. 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

⁶ R.C. Sproul, *Not a Chance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), p. 171.

⁷ Robert Jastrow, *Until the Sun Dies* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1977), pp. 19, 30.

⁸ Don England, *A Critical Look at Evolution*, ed. Robert S. Camp (Atlanta, GA: Religion, Science, and Communication Research and Development Corp., 1972), p. 88.

⁹ Henry M. Morris, *The Twilight of Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964, third print.), p. 35.

¹⁰ Morris, *Scientific Creationism*, p. 26.

¹¹ William Lane Craig, "The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe," from Leadership U. Website: www.leaderu.com/truth/3truth11.html.

¹² Jastrow, p. 32.

¹³ Bert Thompson, *Rock-Solid Faith—How To Build It* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, 2000), p. 135.

¹⁴ *Webster's*, p. 1460.

¹⁵ William Paley, *Natural Theology* (New York, NY: American Tract Society, n.d.), p. 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Wayne Jackson, "Some Atheistic Arguments Answered," from Apologetics Press Website: www.apologeticspress.org/defdocs/rr1989/r&r8901a.htm, pp. 1–2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹ Morris, *Scientific Creationism*, pp. 34–35.

²⁰ Jackson, p. 3.