

Why Should I Believe in God?

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About a month ago, I broke from my usual pattern of reading science-fiction novels and histories to read a book called *Thirty-Six Arguments for the Existence of God*. I'd read a review about it, and thought it sounded interesting. Despite what the title might imply, the book is actually about an atheist professor of psychology who becomes famous for writing a book in which he exposes the 36 arguments that are made for the existence of God as fallacious. From what I gathered, the real-world author's point was that religion is meaningful and important to us, but is ultimately built on an illusion.

That's probably no more outrageous than a lot of the things that I read, but what made the book especially interesting to me is that at its end, the author, who is a professor of philosophy at Princeton, collected the 36 arguments for the existence of God in an appendix and then went through and explained why she thought they were bogus. To be quite honest, I agreed with her most of the time. Many of the arguments that believers make to establish the existence of God aren't very good. For instance, one of the arguments she cited was that the continued existence of the Jewish nation is only explainable because of the protection and providence of God. For myself, I think it's much more likely that the Jews survive to this day because they are very good at surviving and adapting, and their existence proves nothing.

However, not all of the arguments she mentioned were so easy to dismiss. In fact, as I was studying the atheist rebuttal from my believer's perspective, it looked to me like she had real trouble answering four arguments in particular, and so I said to myself, "Aha! It's a sermon!" This is all the more timely because in just a few weeks, our young people will be returning to study in an educational system that is quite frankly hostile to our faith. We need to hear that believing in God does not make us idiots. Indeed, the opposite is true. Let's ask, then, "Why should I believe in God?"

Cosmological Arguments for God.

The first argument that I thought was worthwhile is often called **THE ARGUMENT FROM FIRST CAUSE**. Basically, it asks where everything came from. We see the Bible's famous answer to that question in Genesis 1:1. Everything exists because God, a supernatural power, created it from nothing. By contrast, the whole question becomes much more difficult if we look at it from a naturalistic perspective, in other words, a perspective that does not accept the existence of God or any other supernatural entities. The evidence tells us that the universe didn't always exist. Every star and every galaxy in the universe is actually hurtling forward in space from a single, central point. At that point, at some time, everything came into being that currently exists. So. . . what caused it? To quote *The Sound of Music*, "Nothing comes from nothing; nothing ever could." There had to have been something there that caused the universe, that made all that stuff suddenly exist. What was it? The naturalists have many theories about this. They say that the universe actually exploded out of a super-heavy ball of matter, for instance. However, that only pushes the question back a step. If the universe came from a super-heavy ball of matter, where did the super-heavy ball of matter come from? The only way that we can ever resolve the question is by arguing that the natural universe has a supernatural first cause.

Of course, atheists will respond by saying, "Oh, yeah? Well, what caused God?" However, even to ask that question, they make an assumption about God that is unfounded. They assume that He is susceptible to the rules of causality that govern His creation. Brethren, God exists outside of the universe. He is supernatural. That means He doesn't have to have a cause. He always was. This eternal nature of God is well captured in John 1:1-3. According to this text, everything that has ever come into being came into being through the agency of the Father and the Son. Because Jesus obviously didn't create Himself, that means that the Bible defines Him as a being who never came into being.

Along these same cosmological lines, we can also turn our attention to **THE ARGUMENT FROM PHYSICAL CONSTANTS**. Here's why this is important: We intuitively recognize that evolution seems very, very unlikely. How many things would have to go exactly right for a one-celled bacterium to evolve into something like us? The odds for that are extremely low. The evolutionist response is that in an infinite universe, with an infinite number of planets capable of supporting life, that sooner or later, somebody's going to get lucky, and it just happened to be us.

That's all well and good, but the argument only goes so far. Everything that we can observe is part of the same, singular universe, and throughout our universe, the laws of physics are the same. All of those physical constants are exactly what they have to be, not only to support life, but even for the universe as we know it to exist at all. For instance, there's something called the strong nuclear force. It's the force that binds atoms together. If this strong nuclear force is just one tenth of one percent stronger, the element hydrogen cannot exist, and life chemistry as we know it is impossible. If the strong nuclear force is just one tenth of one percent weaker, no elements heavier than hydrogen can exist, and once again, the existence of life becomes impossible. There are dozens of universe-wide physical phenomena like this, and there's only one universe. The British astrophysicist Fred Hoyle estimated the odds of this occurring by chance as $1:1*10^{40}$, in other words, a fraction with one in the numerator and a 1 followed by 40 zeroes in the denominator. He

concluded, “A common-sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”

We have a very simple explanation for this. It appears in Job 38:4-7. All of these measurements line up because God designed them to line up. The naturalists, though, have a much harder time. They run three main counter-arguments. In the first counter-argument, they hypothesize that there’s some as-yet-unidentified law of physics that all the physical constants have to be what they are, and that all other universes are impossible. I see two flaws in that. First, nobody has been able to prove the existence of such a law, even though they’ve been trying since Einstein. Second, if the only possible universe is a universe that supports humankind, is that an argument against God, or for Him?

I’m going to lump the second and third naturalistic arguments together. Second, they argue that in an alternate universe with different physical constants, a different and totally unfamiliar form of life might have been possible. Third, they argue that there might be multiple universes with different physical laws that are spawned by some sort of mother universe, and that ours just happened to be the lucky universe that gave rise to us. Let me observe something about both of those speculations. They both describe phenomena that can never be observed nor tested. They exist outside of our natural universe, and as such are quite literally supernatural. It requires just as much faith to believe in alternate forms of life or in a mother universe as it does to believe in God. However, these people are so eager to reject God that they will believe in anything but, even if the alternate explanation is nothing better than something they made up themselves. Once again, we have a much simpler explanation, in Psalm 19:1. The order of the universe can only glorify its Creator.

Moral Arguments.

Now, we turn from the universe without to the universe within, to look at some reasons why human nature itself points to the existence of God. The first of these is **THE ARGUMENT FROM FREE WILL**. In Scripture, free will is most strikingly presented in Joshua 24:15. Why can we choose this day whom we will serve? Why do we have the capacity to make good and bad moral decisions? Just about everyone worldwide will agree that we have this capacity. Even the atheist will acknowledge that there is such a thing as right and wrong, and that people who choose to do wrong are guilty and should be punished. Where does this come from? In the naturalistic world, everything we are is either the product of our genes and our environment, or it is the product of random chance. If my genes and my environment compel me to kill my neighbor, how am I responsible for that? I’m not evil; I’m just the victim of bad programming. If random chance leads me to kill my neighbor, why should I be held accountable for something I can’t control? In the naturalist scheme, there is no way to explain free will or a moral sense, and it’s a big logical problem for them.

Our solution to the problem appears in Genesis 2:7. We are moral creatures because we were endowed by God with a soul that enables us to choose between good and evil, and makes us responsible for the consequences. Our souls are the essence of who we are, yet they exist outside of the natural realm, and they enable us either to rise above our genes and our environment or to sink below them. We see the operation of the soul in identical twins like Danielle and Dominique. Danielle and Dominique have exactly the same DNA, they were raised in exactly the same environment, yet they are different people who make different choices. That can only be explained by the presence of a unique soul in each one of them, the one thing they don’t share with each other. All of us similarly have a soul, and with it the priceless power to choose. Once we acknowledge the supernatural soul, we must also acknowledge its supernatural Creator.

Finally, we come to **THE ARGUMENT FROM ALTRUISM**. Let’s begin this with a familiar quote from Jesus, Matthew 6:3-4. To us, this makes perfect sense. We understand that we should do good quietly, not because we hope to be repaid, nor even to attract the praise of men, but to earn the praise of God. In short, we understand that we should be altruistic. However, from the evolutionary perspective, this makes no sense. Darwin’s theory calls for survival of the fittest, that every organism should do everything it can to protect itself and its offspring, even if that means harming some other organism in the process. Altruism is exactly the opposite of that. When I give a hundred dollars to a brother in need, it does me no earthly good. I don’t expect to be repaid, I don’t go around bragging about what a good guy I am, and I don’t have the money anymore to make my life and my family’s life more secure. I am diminishing my chances to win the survival-of-the-fittest competition and increasing somebody else’s chances. In naturalistic terms, I am a fool, and over the next hundreds or thousands of years, I should expect my self-destructively altruistic DNA to be bred out of the human gene pool. And yet, all over the world, altruism survives and even flourishes. Evolutionists argue that this is just an unfortunate side effect of the genes that lead me to care for my relatives and people who will reward me. However, it seems odd, to say the least, that an evolutionary process that is supposedly precise enough to develop something as complex as the human eye is in this instance so imprecise that it allows self-destructive altruism to persist.

In fact, let’s crank things up a notch and look at John 15:13. What can the evolutionist say about the young hero in Afghanistan who throws himself on the grenade to spare the lives of his friends? Soldiers have been dying for their comrades for thousands of years, even though in Darwinian terms it is the single worst decision they can make. Such behavior can only be accounted for by the God who instilled the ideal of self-sacrificing love in each one of us.