

## 1 **The Existence of God (2): Exploring Natural Theology**

- Module: Philosophy
- Lesson 10

## 2 **Some Recommended Resources**

- Reasonable Faith, by William Lane Craig. pp. 91-204
- To Everyone an Answer, by Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland. pp. 57-134
- The Design Revolution, by William Dembski. pp. 223-231
- Darwin's Doubt, by Stephen Meyer, pp. 271-287, 343-381
- The Privileged Planet :
  - Book by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards
  - 42 min. talk by Jay Richards at the 2019 Dallas Conference on Science and Faith, Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j\\_m9DxLJ7V0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_m9DxLJ7V0)
  - 60 minute DVD by Illustra Media

## 3 **Consider Anthony Flew 1923-2010**

- Anthony Flew was one of the twentieth century's most influential atheist philosophers.
- Late in life he came to conclude that God does, in fact, exist.
  - "I have now been persuaded to present here what might be called my last will and testament. In brief, as the title says, I now believe there is a God!"  
[There is a God, (HarperOne, 2007), p. 1]
- Flew explains that he was persuaded chiefly by the need to explain the existence of the cosmos (cosmological argument) and the teleological order of the universe (teleological argument).
  - "I have followed the argument where it has led me. And it has led me to accept the existence of a self-existent, immutable, immaterial, omnipotent, and omniscient Being." (p. 155)

## 4 **The Teleological (Design) Argument**

- From the Greek word teleo — to finish, referring to the end, the goal, or the purpose.
  - Remember the words of Jesus on the cross, "It is finished!" (The Greek word is tetelostai.)
- In our scientific context teleological refers to the fact of the cosmos being arranged in such a way as to give at least the appearance of an overriding goal or end in view — to have been designed.

## 5 **The History of the Argument**

- Articulated by Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle.

- Held by medieval scholars (e. g. Thomas Aquinas).
- Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) attempted to defeat the argument in his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (1779).
- Asserted and defended by William Paley (1743-1805) in his Natural Theology (1804).

## 6 The History of the Argument

- Paley's famous watch-on-the-heath analogy.
  - If one were walking across a heath and happened upon a watch, one would instantly know the watch was designed for a purpose, even if one had never seen a watch before or knew what it was for.
- Hume's criticism of the teleological argument is believed by many skeptics to have defeated Paley's teleological argument.
  - However, Paley wrote 25 years after Hume, and his argument is not generally susceptible to Hume's criticism.
  - Hume's own arguments were strongly refuted by philosopher Thomas Reid (1710-1796) only a year after publication of Hume's arguments. ("Hume did not demolish design, Reid demolished Hume." -Stephen Meyer-)

## 7 Discovering Teleos in China

- Body Level One
  - Body Level Two
    - Body Level Three
      - Body Level Four
        - Body Level Five

## 8 How Do We Detect Design?

- We infer design from a pattern or object when it exhibits what is called specified complexity.
- Naturally occurring objects or patterns in nature typically may exhibit —

## 9 How Do We Detect Design?

- a high degree of specificity (e. g. snowflake),

- or a high degree of complexity (a rock slide).

#### 10 **How Do We Detect Design?**

- However, when we observe a high degree of specificity with a high degree of complexity, we infer that the pattern or object has been designed by a mind.
- High specificity coupled with high complexity is a marker normally associated with the workings of a mind.

#### 11 **Two Primary Aspects To The Teleological Argument**

- The Cosmological Aspect
  - The exquisite fine tuning of the cosmos, including our earth, to permit the very existence of a life-supporting universe and earth points to an intelligent mind underlying the universe's existence.
- The Biological Aspect
  - Features within biological life, such as irreducible complexity and information, point to an intelligent mind underlying all biological life.

#### 12 **A. Cosmological Fine Tuning**

- What is fine tuning?
  - Refers to the preciseness of the numerical values of the constants and quantities in our universe, and other features of the cosmos, that make our universe life-permitting.
  - If a single one of these many constants or quantities happened to lie outside a very limited parameter, the universe would be life-prohibiting.
  - It is astronomically more probable that a randomly occurring universe would be life-prohibiting rather than life-permitting.
  - Fine tuning is not controversial. It is acknowledged by virtually all relevant scientists of every stripe. (Though many differ about what accounts for such fine tuning.)

#### 13 **A. Cosmological Fine Tuning**

- Imagine a giant combination lock in which scores of dials must be set just to just exactly the right value in order to open the lock.
- Consider one such "dial" in nature in Newton's Law of Gravity:  
 $F = Gm_1m_2/r^2$  (where "G" is the gravitational constant).

- The Law of Gravity (or any other natural law) does not determine what the numerical value of  $G$  (the gravitational constant) must be.
- If the value of  $G$  were to lie outside a certain very limited range, the universe would be life-prohibiting.
- There are estimated to be around two hundred such values which have been discovered so far. (See handout)

#### 14 A. Cosmological Fine Tuning

- The gravitational constant
- Earth's orbit within the circumstellar habitable zone of our solar system
- Solar system's location in the galactic habitable zone of our galaxy
- Solar system's type of star (G2 dwarf star)
- Size of our star
- Earth protected by giant gas planets
- Nearly circular orbit
- Oxygen rich atmosphere
- Correct mass of the earth
- Earth orbited by a large moon
- The magnetic field (molten iron in the earth's core)

#### 15 A. Cosmological Fine Tuning

- Plate tectonics
- Ratio of liquid water to the continents
- Earth as a terrestrial planet
- Moderate rate of the earth's rotation
- Thickness of the earth's crust
- Composition of the earth's atmosphere
- Temperate climate
- Protection from radiation
- Initial boundary conditions at the "Big Bang"
- Proper ratio of the four forces necessary for existence of atoms and chemistry (gravity, electromagnetic, strong nuclear, weak nuclear)

#### 16 A. Cosmological Fine Tuning

- Each one of these values must be “set” within a relatively precise parameter to permit the existence of life on earth (or anywhere in the universe).
- There are now approximately two hundred such values known to exist, each and every one of which must be precisely set, or life could not exist.
  - Some of which had to be precisely established within a minuscule of a fraction of a second of the beginning of the cosmos.
  - With the discovery of each new such feature, life on the earth, or elsewhere in the cosmos, becomes exponentially more improbable.

#### 17 A. Cosmological Fine Tuning

- What are the possible explanations to account for fine tuning?
  - Necessity? (Scientists know of no known necessity).
  - Chance?
    - The odds are so astronomically small that chance is only credible if there exists a practically infinite number of universes besides our own (the “multiverse” hypothesis).
    - The multiverse hypothesis is entirely speculative with no existing evidence to support it.
    - Accumulating scientific evidence discounts even the possibility of the multiverse.
    - Even allowing for the possibility of a multiverse, in order for a multiverse to resolve the fine tuning dilemma, those multiple universes would need to have been produced by some “universe generating mechanism” which itself must have been fine tuned.

#### 18 A. Cosmological Fine Tuning

- What are the possible explanations to account for fine tuning?
  - Design?
    - An intelligent mind is the most reasonable explanation for the precise design of the universe to make possible the existence of life.
    - Richard Dawkins (famous Oxford atheist) dismisses the design option as postulating a god that is much more complex than the universe itself (that it violates Okham’s Razor).
    - However, if God is a non-material mind (as Christians believe), He is remarkably simple, without parts. It is his ideas that are complex, but that is a different issue.

#### 19 Understanding the Anthropic Principle (from Greek anthropos: man)

- Two uses of the phrase “Anthropic Principle.”

- Use #1: Refers simply to the fact that the cosmos is finely tuned to permit life.
- Use # 2: Refers to the fact that living beings must observe their cosmos to be finely tuned to permit life. (Living beings could not exist in any non life-permitting cosmos and so would not be able to observe that it didn't permit life.)
  - This use of the anthropic principle is used by skeptics such as Richard Dawkins in an attempt to counter the implication of fine tuning that the cosmos must be designed by an intelligent mind.

## 20 **When the Anthropic Principle is Used to Counter the Argument from Design**

- In an effort to dismiss the overwhelming odds against our universe being life-permitting by mere chance, it goes something like this:
  - "Well, of course we observe that our universe is life-permitting. It has to be life-permitting or we wouldn't be around to observe it."
  - The argument attempts to sidestep the problem of the overwhelming odds against a life-permitting universe by suggesting our universe was necessarily life-permitting or we wouldn't be around to observe that it isn't.

## 21 **The Problem with this Version of the Argument**

- It commits the fallacy of equivocation by changing the question, and then answering the wrong question.
- It changes the question FROM—
  - "What are the odds that a life-permitting universe would exist at all?"
    - The answer to this question is: impossibly small.
  - TO
    - "What are the odds that a living being would observe a life-permitting universe?"
      - The answer to this question is: certain

## 22 **The Problem with this Version of the Argument**

- William Lane Craig's firing squad illustration.
  - A firing squad of twenty expert marksmen fire but fails to kill the man against the wall.
  - The relevant question, after the fact, is not what are the odds the survivor would observe that the twenty marksman failed to kill him? Since he has survived, the odds are obviously very high he would observe they failed to kill him.
  - The question, after the fact, is why, given the odds against failure, did twenty expert marksmen fail to kill him?
- The appropriate question from the anthropic principle is not "why do living beings observe a life-supporting universe", but "why does such a universe exist, given the astonishing odds against it?"

## 23 **B. Biology**

- Irreducible Complexity in Biological Life

- Biological life is so astronomically complex that it almost certainly had to be designed .
  - Many aspects of biological complexity exhibit what is called irreducible complexity.

#### 24 **B. Biology**

- Irreducible Complexity in Biological Life
  - The common mousetrap: an example of irreducible complexity.

#### 25 **B. Biology**

- Many elements in biological life are so dependent on the simultaneous presence of most or all of their functioning parts that they never would have come into existence one part at a time, over millions of years, without each part being in place simultaneously.
  - Each such part has no other biological function apart from its function within the whole.
  - e. g. The bacterial flagellum
- Irreducible complexity points to teleology — that many aspects of biological life give evidence of having been designed with a purpose by an intelligent mind.

#### 26 **B. Biology**

- Information in Biological Life
- Biological life is jam-packed with information, most notably in the DNA (genes) present within all cells in every living thing.
- The DNA is composed of a long chain made up from only four distinct bases (A, T, G, C). The bases are not the information. The information is within the way those bases are arranged within the DNA molecule.

#### 27 **B. Biology**

- Information in Biological Life
- Now scientists have discovered not only that information exists within DNA, but there is also information in living organisms which lies behind or above DNA. This is called epigenetic information.
- There is no materialistic explanation for the existence of information. The fact that information exists in nature is not disputed, but since information has never been known to arise by chance, how can one account for the presence of such information?
- There is only one known source of information: intelligent mind.

#### 28 **The Teleological Problem Remains**

- The life-permitting features of our cosmos, and the complexity and information in biological life, point decisively towards a designer with a purpose.
- This argument for a Creator becomes more robust as science advances, in spite of over 250 years of attempts by skeptics to overthrow it.
- Elements of this argument (and the cosmological argument) are what persuaded one of the 20th century's most prominent atheists, Anthony Flew, to conclude that there was a God.

29  **Next Week:**

- More on the Existence of God