

An Introduction to Christian Apologetics

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Existence of God, part 4

Teleological (Design) Argument for the Existence of God

I. History

- Ancient East: India school of logical atomists
- Ancient West: Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics: “universe directed by a principle of intelligence or reason”
- Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)
 - i. “Fifth Way”
 - ii. argument from “final cause”

Aristotle’s four causes:

Cause	Description	Illustration
Formal	That <i>of which</i>	“chairness”
Material	That <i>out of which</i>	wood
Efficient	That <i>by which</i>	carpenter
Final	That <i>for which</i>	to sit in

- William Paley (1743-1805): watchmaker argument
 - “natural theology” of 18th-19th centuries
- David Hume’s objections
- Charles Darwin: the modern rejection of “final causality”
 - Darwin’s “black box”

II. Present Argument

What is designed had a designer
The universe gives evidence of design
Therefore, the universe had a Designer

A. What is designed had a designer

- i. true by definition (unless “design” reduced to “apparent design”)
- ii. intelligent v. natural causes

B. The universe gives evidence of design

- i. fine-tuning of the universe
 - Cosmic constants
 - (1) oxygen level
 - (2) atmospheric transparency
 - (3) gravitational interaction
 - (4) carbon dioxide
 - (5) gravity
 - (6) formation of life
 - Multiple Universe Theory
- ii. origin of life
 - (1) specified complexity
 - (2) irreducible complexity
 - Naturalism as an ideology (“just-so”)

C. Therefore, the universe had a designer

- i. Does the design argument tell us anything about God?
- ii. Is the design argument just another “god-of-the-gaps” fallacy?
- iii. What about the apparent defects in the universe (dysteleology)?

MIRACLES
(for week 10, October 28)

What is a miracle?

A miracle is a special act of God that interrupts the natural course of events. If there is no transcendent and immanent God, then there are no miracles. Thus, the existence of God must be presupposed or rationally established before a miracle can be identified and verified. A true miracle is defined as a “supernaturally caused singularity,” or, as ably put by one philosopher, “a miracle is something which would never have happened had nature, as it were, been left to its own devices.” Miracles, as such, are not logically possible in the anti-supernaturalistic worldviews of pantheism, atheism, or even deism. Only theism can remain internally consistent and at the same time maintain the possibility of miracles. Thus, only religions that affirm theism as a central tenet of their theology can even begin to claim the miraculous as a confirmation of their message.

Why are miracles important to Christianity?

The Bible claims that God created the world *ex nihilo*, that He miraculously delivered His chosen people Israel from bondage in Egypt, that Jesus Christ His Son was miraculously born of a virgin so that He could assume a human nature without its attendant sinfulness, that Christ Himself performed many miracles during His ministry and that, most significantly, that He rose from the dead in a miraculous defeat of sin and death. Christian theology, thus, presupposes the supernatural and the miraculous. To those who hold that miracles are impossible, much of the Bible is nothing more than fabricated myths that simply reflect the ignorance and prejudices of the pre-scientific culture and time in which it was written. Obviously, for such critics, the very act of divine inspiration itself is repudiated, and only a “neutered” Christianity is tolerated, if any at all. The miraculous, therefore, is a *sine qua non* of the Christian faith.

What are some of the arguments used to reject belief in miracles?

Formulating arguments that still persuade and influence many today, the eighteenth-century skeptic David Hume argued that since a miracle is a rare occurrence (by definition) and that true credibility is based upon the weightier (quantitative) proportion of evidence, miracles should be discredited because one should believe to be true only those things that are demonstrably true in the normal course of things. Hume, did not thereby deny the *possibility* of miracles, just that a wise man as a rule should always believe whatever the greater evidence points to. And since miracles by definition are proportionally deficient to the normal course, they should not be given any credibility.

How can miracles be identified and verified?

First, a miracle must be connected with a truth claim. The God of theism is all-good and incapable of lying so He cannot and would not perform a miracle to confirm a lying prophet. Instead, He periodically has used miracles to confirm messengers of truth, such as Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus and His apostles. Second, a miracle must be truly supernatural as opposed to merely paranormal. Anomalies and magic can be explained naturally. The magicians of Egypt were able to mimic the acts of Moses until he brought forth lice, at which point they declared “this is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19). A miracle, by definition, can only be explained by the supernatural. Third, a miracle must be unique. An alleged supernatural event cannot be used to justify a religious claim if the same event can be performed by another to confirm a contradictory claim. Fourth, for miracles to have apologetic value they should be multiple. An isolated supernatural event would leave room for doubt, but a series of miracles such as those performed by Christ and His apostles cannot be as easily dismissed. Finally, though not essential, miracles are often predictive. The ability of a miracle worker to predict the occurrence of a miracle, such as Jesus prophesying about His resurrection, helps eliminate the charge that it was just a fluke. Apart from the existence of God, none of these verification principles would be possible. Thus, theism is a prerequisite to the possibility and the identifiability of miracles.