

Existence Deserves An Explanation

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Introduction

In writing an argumentative essay there are a multitude of topics that a person could choose to argue. I have chosen what may be the most challenging topic of all. The existence of God is possibly the longest standing controversial subject. Since God is not an empirically visible object which permits us to dissect Him under a microscope, some of the arguments for His existence are based on the observations of His effects, while others are based on logical or philosophical grounds. My intent is to persuasively demonstrate the existence of God and its impact on the meaning of life.

Part 1: Addressing the Opposing Theories of Origins

Since the dawn of time people have sought to answer the big questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Can any of these questions really be answered? A classic example of these questions is expressed in Gauguin's painting entitled, "*Whence, What, and Whither?*" No honest person can ignore these questions and still consider himself thoughtful.

In the area of life and existence, and how life came into being, there are only three *known* explanations of origins. 1. Everything sprang out of nothing.

2. Existence and life originated from an impersonal source. 3. Existence originated from a personal source. These are the only known possible answers to life and the universe. Every theory so far, when boiled down, fits into one of these three categories. Frances Shaeffer, a theologian and philosopher, once wrote, “Although there are many possible details, the possible answers—in their basic concepts—are exceedingly few.”

The first possibility, that everything sprang out of nothing, cannot be sustained or proven because it is scientifically impossible that anything could come into existence out of utter nothing. One of the most basic laws of physics is that, “Out of nothing, nothing comes.” For example, zero times zero still equals zero. As far as we can search back into history, and as played out in our daily experience, we have always seen the physical law of cause and effect. *Everything* that we have, and have been able to discover, is a product or result of something else. There is a source for everything. If nothing *was*, then nothing it would remain. It is a scientific fact that an effect cannot be greater than its cause. Therefore, *nothing* could not cause *something*. A beginning from nothing cannot be an adequate answer. Nothing explains nothing.

So this leads us to the conclusion that *something* must have been forever. Something must be eternal. Therefore, if the universe was born from something that is eternal, then the cause for the universe must have existed outside of it because the universe is not known to be eternal. This eternal “something” could either be a variety of impersonal matter or a personal being. If *nothing* is eternal, then at one point something must have sprung out of nothing, but we have already established this theory to be unfeasible. Therefore, *something* must be eternal. *Something* has existed forever.

Somebody might ask, “Can’t we just believe that the universe always existed? We don’t have to explain its origin. It has always been here. Carl Sagan

held this position in his best-selling book entitled Cosmos. He wrote, “The cosmos is all that *is* or ever *was* or ever *will be*.”

While God may not be available for empirical investigation, the universe is. The vast majority of astrophysicists accept the theory that the universe began at a particular moment in space and time. As Robert Jastrow, founder of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, summarizes the overwhelming scientific consensus, “Now the three lines of evidence—the motions of the galaxies, the laws of thermodynamics, and the life story of the stars—pointed to one conclusion; all indicated that the universe had a distinct beginning.”

Thus far we have reasoned that *something* must be eternal, such as impersonal matter or a personal being. Also, current scientific discoveries have concluded that the universe had a distinct beginning, therefore, the cause for the universe must have been outside of itself.

The second possibility, that everything had an impersonal beginning, implies that: **Time + Chance and Matter + Energy = Existence as we know it.** Holding to this belief, everything would be a product of chance and impersonal forces.

The immediate dilemma with an impersonal beginning is twofold: first, it does not give an adequate explanation for an orderly universe, nor does it explain the human being with all the riches of personality, aspirations, and love. With the view of an impersonal beginning you must accept that *you* are a product of chance. To be a product of chance one would have no meaning or purpose; you just happen to be here. If man has just been kicked up out of the “primordial soup,” that which is only impersonal chance, then those things which make him a man—hope of purpose and significance, love, notions of morality and rationality, beauty and verbal communication—are ultimately unfulfillable, and are thus meaningless. In such a situation, is man actually higher or lower as compared to impersonal nature?

He would then be the lowest creature on the scale. The green moss on the rock is higher than he is, for it can be fulfilled in the universe which exists because moss is also impersonal. The purpose of moss can be found scientifically, while the purpose and meaning of man cannot. If the universe is a product of chance and impersonal matter, then man, being unfulfillable, is meaningless. In this situation man should not walk on the grass, but should respect it, for it is higher than he.

Accepting the theory of an impersonal beginning sounds very *chancy*. The three big questions—where did I come from, why am I here, and where am I going?—are still not adequately answered. It must take an awful lot of faith to believe in this origin.

The third possibility, a personal beginning, is very different from the previous two. The theory of a personal beginning is based on the existence of an eternal, Personal Being. (Remember, we've already concluded that something must be eternal.) This Personal Being would have created the universe and mankind by an act of sheer will. This position is most clearly stated in the Apocalypse where it reads, "*For you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.*" (*Revelations 4:11b*) Starting from a personal beginning, all the big questions can be adequately answered. To be "created" implies a reason or purpose for that creation. Meaning for our life would then be a real possibility. This theory would also explain our complex personalities and aspirations. A personal beginning provides a philosophical position that a person can live out consistently.

Part 2: Six Arguments for the existence of God

Now that we have looked into the different theories of how the universe began, this next section will be devoted to six arguments supporting the explanation of a personal beginning.

The argument from desire:

There are distinctions between different kinds of desires. Most human desires fit into one of two categories: innate or externally conditioned, in other words, *natural* desires or *artificial* desires. For example, we naturally desire things like food, drink, sleep, sex, and knowledge. We can also desire things like sports cars, flying through the air like superman, or a Red Wings world championship, however, these are not usually *natural* desires. The main difference between the two types of desires is that a natural desire comes from within ourselves; an artificial desire comes from without, such as society, advertising or fiction. Natural desires are found in all human beings, but the artificial desires vary from person to person.

As human beings, we find it difficult to be *perfectly* content or satisfied with most things because we always desire more. There is always more that we can search for and aspire to attain. There are those everlasting questions that naturally echo in our minds. Can we ever satisfy these desires?

C. S. Lewis, an Oxford University professor and author, wrote, “Creatures are not born with natural desires unless satisfaction for these desires exist. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable answer is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy my desires, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.”

If all desires have the potential to be fulfilled, then the questions that we desire answers for *could* be answered. As Peter Kreeft, a professor of philosophy at Boston College, has written, “No one has ever found even one case of an innate

desire for a nonexistent object.” If this statement is true, and if you desire significance and meaning for your whole existence, then there must be a reality that corresponds to that desire.

The Ontological Argument:

This argument was devised by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), who wanted to produce a simple argument for the existence of God.(69) The first time you read this argument it will probably sound more like a riddle than anything else, however, it is a very unique argument. It is as follows:

1. It is greater for a thing to exist in the mind *and* in reality than in the mind alone.
2. “God” means “that of which a greater cannot be thought.”
3. Suppose that God exists in the mind but not in reality.
4. Then a greater than God *could* be thought (namely, a being that all the qualities that our thought of God has *plus* real existence).
5. But this is impossible, for God is “that of which a greater cannot be thought.”
6. Therefore God exists in the mind and in reality.

The Argument from Truth:

Our limited and finite minds can discover eternal truths about being and existence. Truth properly resides in a mind because only a mind, or something like a mind, could comprehend and discern both truth and knowledge. But the human mind is not known to be eternal. Therefore, there is likely to exist an eternal mind in which these eternal truths reside.

The Moral Argument:

“Even the pagans show that what the moral law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them.” (Romans 2:15) If we take a look at human nature we will find two truths: that we know what we ought to do and be, and that we know when we fail to do or be that. Real moral obligation is a fact. As human beings we are truly, objectively obligated to do good and avoid evil. For example, not many people doubt that we should help the elderly across the street instead of running them over. Atheism is completely incompatible with the fact that there is a moral code that we follow. Following Atheist beliefs, there could be no right or wrong because we would be a product of chance and everything would be equal. Unfortunately, no person could live consistently with this view point. There *is* a difference between right and wrong, and though it can be distorted sometimes, everyone seems to know it. For example, people all over the world help homeless and hungry people. If the effect of chance is a good thing, and there is no right or wrong, then why do people help the unfortunate? The answer is that we don't always help unfortunate people because we *want* to, but because we feel that we *ought* to. Even people who live in primitive tribes away from the rest of the world seem to know these moral obligations.

I thought it was interesting that one of the requirements for this persuasive essay was to appeal to a person's "ethical sense." All of us writing this essay are supposed to know what "ethical sense" means. Where did this "ethical sense" come from? Certainly not from molecular complexity and chance, that doesn't explain a moral code that is ingrained into the mind of every living human being. Only a creator with ethical sense could explain a consistent creation with ethical sense.

God as compared to a concept:

One of the main problems that people have when it comes to believing in God is that He doesn't seem very real. We cannot touch God. We cannot see God. We cannot hear God. Therefore, there must not be such a thing as a God.

Now compare God to a concept, such as love. We cannot touch love. We cannot see love. We cannot hear love. Therefore, there must not be such a thing as love. What an interesting concept, but hardly sustainable.

The fact is, we would be hard pressed to find someone who denied the existence of love. Our need and desire for love is too obvious to deny. We know, without being told, that love helps to bring fulfillment and happiness. On the other hand, we deny God. Our need and desire for complete fulfillment is very obvious to most people. The main things that can bring us complete fulfillment are a reason, a meaning, and a purpose for our existence. A personal God seems like the best way to fulfill what we desire most. Although God may not *seem* real to our physical senses, that hardly means that He doesn't exist.

The Dilemma of Parenting:

Another common problem people have when it comes to believing in God is that there is so much evil and pain in the world. *If* there really is a God, then why does He let so many terrible things happen? Also, why is there so many conflicting beliefs? If there really is *one* eternal God, then wouldn't we all believe the same way? *If* there really is a God, then He must not care very much.

My proposal is that God does care, but there's not a whole lot that He will change for us without our cooperation. For example, imagine that you are a parent with a child. You would raise that child to the best of your ability. You would try to put good influences in that child's life. You would nourish that child with all that you had to give. Now let's say that child made all the right decisions in life, grew up successful and happy, and loved and respected you more than anything.

By doing all these things that child would bring honor, pride, and joy to *you*, as the parent.

Now let's say that your child grew up and denounced you and all that you had taught. You would be devastated, but there would be no way to force what you know to be true on your child. Your child would have, as all human beings have, a will of their own.

Now compare yourself to this hypothetical child. If you *choose* to do what is right and live according to God, you bring honor and joy to God. If you decide to exercise your personal freedom and deny God, then He will be devastated, but there is no way to *force* anything upon you without violating your free will which He honors. If God wanted machines that constantly obeyed Him, then He would have created machines. But what glory would come from a machine that *had* to obey its Creator. The glory that God receives is in the glory of choice and freedom. If we choose wrong, that is where evil, pain, and uncertainty come from. If we choose of our own free will to believe in God and follow Him, that would be the fulfillment of God's personal creation.

Part 3: Predicting the Consequences After Death

Pascal's Wager:

Supposing that my previous arguments have done nothing to convince you that there is a God, then consider this last argument. This argument is a little different. This is a diagram of the prospects that you have after death, depending on what you believe. This diagram is called Pascal's wager:

God exists or God does not exist

I believe in God or I don't believe in God

I live for God or I live only for myself

Let us assess the four possibilities of this wager:

1. If God *does* exist, and you *do* believe in Him, you *win* everything.
2. If God *doesn't* exist, and you *do* believe in Him, you *lose* nothing.
3. If God *doesn't* exist, and you *don't* believe in Him, you *win* nothing.
4. If God *does* exist, and you *don't* believe in Him, you *lose* everything.

Even if the arguments for God haven't convinced you, look at the chances above. Considering that you only get one life, and you only get one chance, it would be better to be safe than sorry.

Conclusion

I hope that I have convinced you that there must be a God. Our very being cries out for more of an explanation than mere chance. We know instinctively that we are significant. As I have tried to show, a personal Creator is the only adequate explanation for our existence.

Now there is just one more thing to say before this essay is complete. The fact that God exists gives us existence, a purpose, and a meaning. To deny God's existence and purpose to go after our own desires makes our life, as the existentialists say, ultimately meaningless. The only eternal meaning we have is God's meaning for us. To live our lives for ourselves will get us nowhere fast because our lives are short and time goes by quickly. We need to strive for eternal things. Who knows the purpose, meaning, and fulfillment of a creation better than its Creator?