

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD—no. 2

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This particular essay has to do with Teleological argumentation for God's existence. The term "teleology" means "purpose" or "end goal," so the teleological arguments start from order, adjustment, purpose and design in nature, to argue the case for one capable of producing such complexity. This is by far the most commonly employed argument for God's existence, being used in the philosopher's classroom as well as by the proverbial "man on the street." It is also one that is frequently attacked as inadequate to establish a case for God. The argument goes like this: Order, adjustment, and/or purpose imply design. And, design implies one capable of effecting such order, adjustment, and/or purpose. Thus, a supreme Designer exists!

Perhaps the most well known expression of this argument is found in the writings of William Paley, with his famous "watch" argument.¹ Paley argued that no one would be so foolish as to suggest that a watch (as complex as it is) had no designer. And, just as it is foolish to suppose that a watch had no designer, it is even more foolish to suppose that the marvelous human body had no Designer.

In spite of how commonly used the argument happens to be, there are some weaknesses that require us to be just a bit more precise in presenting the case. That is the goal of this essay. For instance, it could be argued that the "Teleological" argument is just another form of the "Cosmological" argument, since when all is said and done, we are still searching for an explanatory cause of the order, adjustment, and design we find in the universe. Nevertheless, the argument is generally understood to stand on its own, and that is how I shall treat it here.

The argument to be developed in the first part of this essay is as follows:

1. If a thing contains information, then an intelligent being must exist who has the ability to act upon the thing so as to inform it.
2. The simplest living cells contain information (in fact, an enormous amount of information).
3. Therefore, an intelligent being must exist who has the ability to act upon the thing so as to inform it.

Now, picture the situation. Before there were any life forms at all in the universe, there must have been an intelligent Being capable of informing cells, for uninformed cells do not and cannot produce living beings. In fact, the information content of the cell determines what kind of being will result. But, let us reason together about this phenomena.

One can explain some marvelously structured things by means of non-intelligent intervention. For example, snowflakes exhibit symmetrical, interesting, and often beautiful shapes, and yet we know that these can be explained simply in terms of the physics of crystallization. In other words, in spite of the fact that God would be the *ultimate explanation* of such occurrences, one does not need to posit God as an *immediate explanation* for snowflakes. But, no one can explain ice sculptures without appealing to intelligent intervention. We can explain the beautiful stalactites and stalagmites found in limestone caves like Mammoth Cave in Kentucky or the Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico, by appealing to non-intelligent natural causes. But, no one would dare try to explain the carvings on Mt. Rushmore apart from intelligent intervention.

Richard Taylor argues:

Suppose . . . that you are riding in a railway coach and glancing from the window at one of the stops, you see numerous white stones scattered about on a small hillside near the train in a pattern resembling these letters: THE BRITISH RAILWAYS WELCOMES YOU TO WALES. Now you could scarcely doubt that these stones do not just accidentally happen to exhibit that pattern. You would, in fact, feel quite certain that they were purposely arranged that way to convey an intelligible message. . . .

Here, however, is the important point it is easy to overlook; namely, that if, upon seeing from the train window a group of stones arranged as described, you were to conclude that you were entering Wales, and if your sole reason for thinking this, whether it was in fact good evidence or not, was that the stones were so arranged, then you could not, consistently with that, suppose that the arrangement of the stones was accidental. You would, in fact, be presupposing that they were arranged that way by an intelligent and purposeful being or beings for the purpose of conveying a certain message having nothing to do with the stones themselves. Another way of expressing the same point is that it would be **irrational** for you to regard the arrangement of the stones as evidence that you were entering Wales, and at the same time to suppose that they might have come to have arrangement accidentally, that is, as the result of ordinary interactions of natural or physical forces.²

The message that was conveyed was the result of intelligent intervention. And, no one would ever think otherwise. The construction of such a message presupposes that an intelligent source produced (or, "informed") it. And, the reception of such a message by another is clear and convincing evidence of such an intelligent source!

We would also never question the man who argued that life always comes from life. In spite of the fact that evolutionists must have complex living beings arising from simple living beings and, in turn, ultimately, from non-living matter for their theory to be true, the only evidence we have (or have ever had) is that life arises from life. This conclusion has been verified millions of times in human experience. Not once has there been verification of a contradictory conclusion! Similarly, when I argue that living cells contain complex information codes, and that complex information codes imply an intelligent cause of that information, no one will fail to follow the argument. Our

uniform experience demonstrates to us over and over again that such information comes only from intelligent beings. In fact, I would go so far as to argue that a contradictory conclusion is not possible.

When we see the arrangement of stones upon entering Wales, we understand that the message was purposely arranged by an intelligent being(s). If such simple statements like “the UnCola” or “Coke—the Real Thing” convince us that they had an intelligent source, then how could rational men refuse to recognize the same connection with reference to the highly complex information-rich packets found in living things? In other words, complex information-rich packets imply an intelligent source. Rational men could not conclude otherwise! Ultimately, all information-rich packets imply an intelligent source, for all information is complex, and no information arises from mere natural (non-intelligent) causes!

Carl Sagan, well-known atheistic scientist (now deceased) argued that even a single contact from outer space would prove that there are intelligent beings there. As a result of his fascination with extra-terrestrial life, he had been involved in numerous efforts to search for life in outer space. He said:

The receipt of a single message from space would show that it is possible to live through such technological adolescence: the transmitting civilization, after all, has survived. Such knowledge, it seems to me, might be worth a great price³.

Now, how can scientists (or anyone else, for that matter) be so sure that just one simple message from outer space would prove an intelligent source? Is it not possible that such could be merely an accidental combination of noise? Hardly!! Regular experience demonstrates to each of us that even such a simple message as described by Sagan implies an intelligent source. Interestingly enough, Sagan also tells us that living things

are highly complex bundles of information. For instance, he said, with reference to a single living cell:

The information content of a simple cell has been estimated as around 10 to the 12th power bits, comparable to about a hundred million pages of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.⁴

But, how much information is contained, then, in the human brain? Sagan ventures his estimate here too:

The information content of the human brain expressed in bits is probably comparable to the total number of connections among the neurons—about a hundred trillion bits. If written out in English, say, that information would fill some twenty million volumes, as many as in the world's largest libraries. The equivalent of twenty million books is inside the heads of every one of us. The brain is a very big place in a very small space.⁵

The information contained within **each living cell** is equivalent to the amount of information contained in a hundred million pages of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. And the information contained in the human brain is roughly equivalent to the information contained in twenty million books of any given library. If each book contained five hundred pages (likely an average number of pages for such books), then the information content would total ten trillion pages! Now, Sagan argued that a **single simple message** from outer space proves the existence of intelligent life that is capable of communicating by means of such a message. How much more so is that apparent when one considers the amazing living cell? Only a very stubborn irrationality can argue that a single, simple message from space proves an intelligent source, whereas the complex information-rich packets found within living cells proves nothing at all with reference to its source!

Agnostics Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe were forced by the evidence to abandon the traditional evolutionary explanation of the origin of life. They said:

From the beginning of this book we have emphasized the enormous information content of even the simplest living systems. The information cannot in our view be generated by what are often called “natural” processes, as for instance through meteorological and chemical processes occurring at the surface of a lifeless planet. As well as a suitable physical and chemical environment, a large initial store of information was also needed. We have argued that the requisite information came from an “intelligence,” the beckoning spectre.

To be sure, the books in a library contain information. Yet, we do not think of a book as an “intelligence.” A further quality is needed to define intelligence, namely the ability to act on information which a book alone cannot do. As well as providing information, our spectre is required also to act on it, which is why we refer to the thing as an “intelligence.”⁶

Again, they said:

No matter how large the environment one considers, life cannot have had a random beginning. Troops of monkeys thundering away at random on typewriters could not produce the works of Shakespeare, for the practical reason that the whole observable universe is not large enough to contain the necessary monkey hordes, the necessary typewriters, and certainly the waste paper baskets required for the deposition of wrong attempts. The same is true for living material.

As our ideas developed, a monstrous spectre kept beckoning. Just as the brain of Shakespeare was necessary to produce the famous plays, **so prior information was necessary to produce a living cell.** But information from where?⁷

The only answer that makes sense at all is that there is, in fact, an intelligent Being who is capable of acting upon cells so as to “inform” (or, program, if you prefer that word) them! And, this Being is what theists mean when they speak of God. Indeed, the Bible speaks of God as the Creator of all things that exist, other than Himself (Rom. 1:19ff; Acts 17:22ff.). Actually, a quite simple passage conveniently summarizes what is meant by both the “cosmological” argument and the “teleological” argument. **“For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4, NASB95).** Let’s ask an intriguing question: “How would you explain what caused a house?” You would certainly not say that it is in its present state because of millions

upon millions of years of natural forces acting upon wood and metal and other things that eventually resulted in the finished structure. If we asked another question: "What accounts for the orderliness of the structure?" you would not insist that the order we now see in the finished product resulted due to chance forces acting over time. The first question (re: "cause") approximates the way one presents the "cosmological" argument, while the second question (re: "order") more closely approximates what one understands as the "teleological" argument.

OBJECTIONS TO TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTATION

The "teleological" arguments have had their share of detractors. You will recall that the argument moves from purposiveness in the universe to an intelligent cause. That is, the only way to account for purpose and order in some things is by means of intelligent intervention.

Perhaps the most common objection to "teleological" arguments is that we simply discover (or, assume) **order** in nature, and that this fact does not permit us to conclude that this order was purposely designed or caused. B. C. Johnson elaborates:

The starting point of this version of the argument is plainly false. The human mind does not create orderly behavior in the artifacts it makes. On the contrary, human beings **make use** of the orderly behavior already existing as a characteristic feature of the materials from which such objects are made. They discover just what the orderly behavior of nature is and then employ this behavior for their own purposes. If nature had not been orderly from the outset, no one could ever build anything that would work. With the laws of mechanics, no clock would ever function. Without the laws of electricity, no light-bulb would ever glow. Without the laws of chemistry, no car would ever start. There is no evidence that minds originate the kind of orderly behavior we employ in our artifacts. Minds only redirect existing orderly behavior so that the latter conforms to specific purposes. . . . Furthermore, without evidence that minds originate this fundamentally ordered behavior, we have no evidence that they are even capable of doing so. The evidence we do have indicates that orderly behavior must exist **before** minds can impose their

purposes on nature. It is therefore incorrect to argue that orderliness results from a mind imposing its purposes on nature.⁸

I will freely grant the fact that it is too great a leap in logic from **all** ordered things in the universe to the existence of God! But, my argument does not make that mistake, since I argued that the natural laws of physics, chemistry, etc., could account for numerous phenomena that are highly structured, and which exhibit tremendous orderliness. There is no need to posit God as an immediate (though, certainly, an ultimate) explanation of these phenomena. However, this is not true with all things that exhibit order. Some things that bear the marks of orderliness can be explained **only** by means of intelligent intervention! Such is the case with the information-rich content of living cells.

Moreover, the theist does not argue that the human mind creates orderly behavior in the artifacts made by men. At least this is true for a large number of artifacts. But, what about books and/or computers, and the like? Whatever order may happen to be possessed by any of these "artifacts," it is an order which originates from the outside. And, it was an intelligent intervention! All I have suggested is that we are entitled to make this same inference from the information content of living cells or the brain. The information content of living cells is such as to warrant the deduction of intelligent intervention from the outside.

Furthermore, Johnson speaks of the "laws" of electricity, chemistry, mechanics, and nature itself. He insists that men "discover just what the orderly behavior of nature is and then employ this behavior for their own purposes." Actually, he makes my point for me. Indeed, men discover this orderliness. But, we are not asking about the **discovery** of such orderliness. Instead, we are inquiring as to the **origin** of such orderliness. In some cases (like books and computers), the orderliness discovered originates from the outside,

and bears the unmistakable marks of intelligent intervention. Likewise, in some cases, what we discover in nature bears the unmistakable marks of intelligent intervention. Once again, we are entitled to draw the conclusion that such intervention originates from the outside.

Another objection focuses upon the theory of evolution. With only a slight variation from the first objection, this argument suggests that orderliness in nature evolved. Wallace Matson explained:

After 1859 (with the publishing of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, D.S.), it was possible to regard the curious adapting of means to ends in nature as the outcome of a long process of development, in which, beginning with the simplest kinds of proto-organisms, those varieties that just happened to possess some slightly superior adaptation to their environment—some little added fillip of complexity—would survive and reproduce themselves, passing on their advantage to their descendants, while their inferior rivals became extinct. Darwin in biology, like Laplace in celestial mechanics half a century earlier, “had no need of the hypothesis” of God.⁹

The argument here is that the kinds of adaptations that we argued were the core of “teleological” argumentation, can be explained by some form of Darwinian evolution. Again, however, I argue that one can explain numbers of interesting phenomena naturally, such as diamond formation, crystalline deposits, etc. But, it does not follow that all structured phenomena can be explained in this way, either immediately or ultimately! And, I argued that the information content of living cells is precisely the kind of structure that requires a non-natural explanation! Let the Darwinians explain the origin of life from non-living matter without appealing to spontaneous generation, which has been disproven many times over. Such an explanation will never be forthcoming. Yet, this is precisely what is required by the atheist's objection to my argument.

Richard Dawkins tried his hand at an objection to this sort of argument in a book he authored.¹⁰ The rationale behind the book is the following:

All appearances to the contrary, the only watchmaker in nature is the blind forces of physics, albeit deployed in a very special way. A true watchmaker has foresight: he designs his cogs and springs, and plans their inter-connections, with a future purpose in his mind's eye. Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind and no mind's eye. It does not plan for the future. It has no vision, no foresight, no sight at all. If it can be said to play the role of watchmaker in nature, it is the *blind* watchmaker.¹¹

Dawkins intends his book to be a refutation of the popular design argument. Still he cannot help admitting the point made earlier about the incredibly complex information content of cells in the body. He said:

Physics *books* may be complicated, but . . . The objects and phenomena that a physics book describes are simpler than a single cell in the body of its author. And the author consists of trillions of those cells, many of them different from each other, organized with intricate architecture and precision-engineering into a working machine capable of writing a book. . . .

.....
Each nucleus . . . contains a digitally coded database larger, in information content, than all 30 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together. And this figure is for *each* cell, not all the cells of a body put together.¹²

Dawkins likens this information content to the programming of a computer. He continues:

It is raining DNA outside. . . . It is raining instructions out there; it's raining programs; it's raining tree-growing, fluff-spreading algorithms. That is not a metaphor, it is the plain truth. It couldn't be any plainer if it were raining floppy discs. . . .

.....
What is special is that these molecules are put together in much more complicated patterns than the molecules of nonliving things, and this putting together is done by following programs, sets of instructions for how to develop, which the organisms carry around inside themselves. . . . What lies at the heart of every living thing is . . . information, words, instructions. If you want a metaphor, don't think of fires and sparks and breath. Think, instead, of

a billion discrete, digital characters carved in tablets of crystal. If you want to understand life, don't think about vibrant, throbbing gels and oozes, think about information technology.¹³

He is making use of a supposed analogy between computers and living beings. Every computer has ROM memory and RAM memory. ROM memory is "read-only memory" which cannot be written to except when it is first manufactured. Dawkins says, "that is true also of the DNA in cells, except for occasional random errors in copying."¹⁴ Data is written to different addresses on the computer. Dawkins explains that different species have different addresses too, so, "it is not possible to compare contents, address by address, because addresses don't correspond to each other across species barriers."¹⁵

This simply means that humans are humans, chimpanzees are chimpanzees, elephants are elephants, etc. They simply don't cross breed, or intermingle, because their DNA coding is **different and unique!**

Now, how do you suppose that all of this different and unique coding happened? I have argued earlier that there is only one sensible answer to this question. Information-rich content presupposes an informer! It demands intelligent intervention from the outside!! This is *the only explanation* that fits the evidence. Dawkins, however, has other explanations:

Once in a blue moon the addressing system itself changes. Chimpanzees have 24 pairs of chromosomes and we have 23. We share a common ancestor with chimpanzees, so at some point in either our ancestry or chimps' there must have been a change in chromosome number. Either we lost a chromosome (two merged), or chimps gained one (one split). There must have been at least one individual who had a different number of chromosomes from his parents.¹⁶

How does life get started?

The origin of life was the chemical event, or series of events, whereby the vital conditions for natural selection first came about. The major ingredient

was heredity, either DNA or (more probably) something that copies like DNA but less accurately, perhaps the related molecule RNA. Once the vital ingredient—some kind of genetic molecule—is in place, true Darwinian natural selection can follow, and complex life emerges as the eventual consequence. . . .

.....
Scientists invoke the magic of large numbers. . . . The beauty of the anthropic principle is that it tells us, against all intuition, that a chemical model need only predict that life will arise on one planet in a billion billion to give us a good and entirely satisfying explanation for the presence of life here.¹⁷

Whew! I was beginning to think that there really wasn't any good evidence for the evolution of complex life forms from simple life forms, arising ultimately from non-living matter! Richard Dawkins has come to my rescue. I have now learned that we should just **assume** a common ancestor between ourselves and chimps, and that "once in a blue moon," there "must" have "been a change in chromosome number." And, if we just "invoke the magic of large numbers" "against all intuition," using a "chemical model," we can "predict" that "life will arise on one planet in a billion billion." I was really getting worried that those pesky theistic philosophers might just have a point with their argument that "complex information-rich packets require an intelligent intervention by an informer." But, now I understand how to climb "Mount Improbable" (as Dawkins refers to it, in a book he wrote with this title).¹⁸ Actually, my tongue-in-cheek response shows just how untenable Dawkins' theory turns out to be! It is not "Mount Improbable;" it is, instead, "Mount Impossible!"

The question of origins, strictly speaking, is NOT a scientific problem. And, it certainly does not deserve to be treated in a science classroom! It is a philosophical problem. The primary question has always been, "why is there anything at all?" Digging a little deeper, we also ask: "how can pure matter produce beings who are goal-directed, who can reproduce themselves, and who possess this "coded chemistry," of which

Dawkins speaks? How can one give a materialistic explanation for the origin of **first life forms**? Then, how can one prove the emergence of **complex life forms** (the so-called “tree of life”) from simple **non-complex life forms**? Notice that I am not asking for the “magic of large numbers;” rather, I am asking for proof! I am going to cite the same sources that Antony Flew used in his latest book, because they were impressive to him (and likewise to me). Andy Knoll, professor of biology at Harvard, and author of *Life on a Young Planet: The First Three Billion Years of Life*, said:

If we try to summarize by just saying what, at the end of the day, we do know about the deep history of life on Earth, about its origin, about its formative stages that gave rise to the biology we see around us today, I think we have to admit that we’re looking through a glass darkly here. *We don’t know how life started on this planet. We don’t know exactly when it started, we don’t know under what circumstances.*¹⁹

Antonio Lazcano, the president of the International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life, reports:

One feature of life, though, remains certain: Life could not have evolved without a genetic mechanism—one able to store, replicate, and transmit to its progeny information that can change with time. . . . Precisely how the first genetic machinery evolved also persists as an unresolved issue. . . . The exact pathway for life’s origin may never be known.²⁰

Finally, with regard to the question of reproduction, John Maddox, the editor emeritus of *Nature*, writes: “The overriding question is when (and then how) sexual reproduction itself evolved. Despite decades of speculation, we do not know.”²¹ I have long believed that this is one of those “unsolvable problems” for evolutionists. Given the theory of “natural selection,” organisms are supposed to adopt (over long periods of time) those characteristics that are advantageous to survival, and to discard those that aren’t. Some simple forms of life are, in fact, hermaphroditic, that is, they have within themselves the ability to reproduce, without the necessity of an opposite gender for the purpose of

procreation. This would seem to be the most advantageous characteristic for survival, if the theory of natural selection is true! Then why do most species, including all those that are more complex, have male and female counterparts so that reproduction can actually occur? And, how is it that male and female sexual organs fit so nicely together in order to accomplish that purpose? I find this virtually impossible for an evolutionist to explain while, at the same time, maintaining the notion of “survival of the fittest.” The theory of evolution demands that, both sexes evolved independently of one another. How did reproduction occur while this evolutionary process was still incomplete? In fact, **all** biologic symbiotic relationships had to evolve independently! This is the “Mount Impossible” that evolutionists have to climb in order to continue advancing their theory. If students in public or state supported schools ever hear information like this in classrooms today, given the extreme prejudice **against** any alternative explanation to evolution, it will almost always be **purely by accident**. Such alternative explanations will rarely (if ever) be communicated to the students on purpose!

Now, these three fellows (Knoll, Lazcano, and Maddox) seem to be confused as to the origin of living things from non-living matter. Perhaps they should simply ask Richard Dawkins to help them find their way! Evidently, they need to invoke the “magic of large numbers” (i.e., given enough time and sufficient attempts, the impossible becomes possible) that so completely impresses Dawkins, in order to answer their own bewildering questions. Truthfully, they are quite candid in their admissions (and there are dozens more who admit the same lack of knowledge), and Dawkins could learn some valuable things from them. As a matter of fact, he might have learned a little from others, because he quite candidly admitted on the interview conducted for the movie *Expelled*:

No Intelligence Allowed that he simply does not know how life started! I think that I can help him find an answer to this question!

A LITTLE MORE CLARITY ON THIS ARGUMENT

I intend to deepen the argument somewhat by embarking upon territory that goes beyond the information content of living cells. In fact, I intend to close the door to detractors of “teleological” argumentation.

Roy Abraham Varghese (with whom I shared some time as a fellow student at the International Academy of Philosophy) was instrumental in putting together a couple of important meetings between atheists and theists. I attended these meetings. The first meeting gave rise to his first book, *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God*. Since then he has written others, including a collaboration with Antony Flew in Flew’s latest book, *There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*.²² Flew says that Varghese’s writings are “examples of the kind of reasoning that led me to change my mind about God’s existence.”²³ I include here a lengthy quotation from Varghese that was included in this book, because it fits into my continued argument in this essay:

In considering our immediate experience, let us perform a thought experiment. Think for a minute of a marble table in front of you. Do you think that, given a trillion years or infinite time, this table could suddenly or gradually become conscious, aware of its surroundings, aware of its identity the way you are? It is simply inconceivable that this would or could happen. And the same goes for any kind of matter. Once you understand the nature of matter, of mass-energy, you realize that, by its very nature, it could never become “aware,” never “think,” never say “I.” But the atheist position is that, at some point in the history of the universe, the impossible and the inconceivable took place. Undifferentiated matter (here we include energy), at some point, became “alive,” then conscious, then conceptually proficient, then an “I.” But returning to our table, we see why this is simply laughable. The table has none of the properties of being conscious and, given infinite

time, it cannot “acquire” such properties. Even if one subscribes to some far-fetched scenario of the origin of life, one would have taken (sic) leave of one’s sense to suggest that, given certain conditions, a piece of marble could produce concepts. And, at a subatomic level, what holds for the table holds for all the other matter in the universe.

Over the last three hundred years, empirical science has uncovered immeasurably more data about the physical world than could ever have been imagined by our ancestors. This includes a comprehensive understanding of the genetic and neural networks that underlie life, consciousness, thought, and the self. But beyond saying that these four phenomena operate with a physical infrastructure that is better understood than ever before, science cannot say anything about the nature or origin of the phenomena themselves. Although individual scientists have tried to explain them as manifestations of matter, there is no way possible to demonstrate that my understanding of this sentence is nothing but a specific neural transaction. Granted, there are neural transactions that accompany my thoughts—and modern neuroscience has pinpointed the regions of the brain that support different kinds of mental activity. But to say that a given thought *is* one specific neural transaction set is as inane as suggesting that the idea of justice is nothing but certain marks of ink on paper. It is incoherent, then, to suggest that consciousness and thought are simply and solely physical transactions.²⁴

Varghese suggests that there are five phenomena, evident in our immediate experience, that can only be explained in terms of the existence of God. These are: (1) rationality; (2) life, by which is meant the ability to act autonomously; (3) consciousness, which is the ability to be aware; (4) conceptual thought; and (5) the “center” of consciousness, thought, and action—the “I.” Flew is profoundly impressed with the question of “life” and the information content of cells. He also had a good bit to say about the “anthropic principle” (the fact that the universe appears to have been specifically designed to support life), and the “laws of nature” which he insists require a “lawmaker.” But, it is the fifth point Varghese makes that I want to take up in order to strengthen the “teleological” argument beyond what has already been said about intelligent intervention.

Every act of perception, each conscious thought, all unconscious and subconscious acts of the mind, and all characteristics of thinking, willing, feeling, remembering, etc., presuppose the “center” of consciousness which we can identify as the “I.” To reverse Descartes, it is not “I think, therefore, I am,” but rather, “I am, therefore, I think.” This center of consciousness is so far removed from any natural process that it is strictly impossible that such could have originated from non-living matter! In fact, the “I” may be the closest we will ever get to fully understanding what is meant by the term “soul,” or, we may choose to refer to this as the “personal center” of one’s existence. Scripture says that humans have been created in the “image” of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6). Scripture also depicts man as a tripartite being (“body, soul, and spirit,” 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). If we think about this “personal center,” let’s begin to reflect on the whole spectrum of physical (or, material) beings, from non-living matter to human beings. For instance, animals are also living beings. So are various types of plants (flora and fauna). Rocks and dirt (i.e., “pure matter”) are not living things. So, we ask about the differences between non-living matter, various life-forms (plants and animals) and human beings (or, those possessing a “personal center”).

A number of years ago, I debated Arlie Hoover on the nature of Biblical faith. Both of us are Christians, consequently, the discussion turned on a number of important Biblical passages. However, there were also several significant philosophical points that were introduced in the discussion as well. Dr. Hoover’s proposition was: “In general matters of human knowledge, things not perceived through the senses are matters of faith and do not provide the certainty of empirical knowledge.” Since his proposition mirrors a very common notion of “faith,” I thought it best to take this matter up in public

discussion. My proposition, by way of contrast, was: "Some non-empirical propositions may be known with greater certainty than empirically perceived things." In this discussion, I said:

I will simply list a number of propositions which are known with absolute certainty and which are all "non-empirical truths." But, since my proposition only obligates me to show that these are known with a greater degree of certainty than "empirical knowledge," I shall argue only for this. And, I challenge anyone to deny that the following are known with greater certainty than "empirical knowledge:" (1) "Justice cannot be attributed to impersonal beings;" (2) "moral virtue presupposes freedom;" (3) "every judgment (statement or proposition) makes a claim to be either true or false;" (4) "responsibility presupposes freedom;" (5) "every change presupposes a sufficient cause;" (6) "an impersonal being cannot embody a moral virtue, such as humility;" (7) "moral values cannot be attributed to an impersonal being;" (8) "every value demands an adequate response on the part of the person to whom it is revealed;" (9) "love implies interest in the happiness of the beloved;" etc. . . . I insist that each of these represents a necessary state of affairs. As such, they are all capable of being known with a greater degree of certainty than empirical forms of knowledge, which *never* represent necessary states of affairs.²⁵

Now, let's return to an earlier distinction. Consider just those propositions that speak of moral values. Would anyone be so foolish as to attribute **any** moral value to non-living matter? Let's advance the thinking just a bit further. Do we hold the beautiful flowers we see in nature responsible for anything at all? Are the flowers blameworthy or praiseworthy? Can we imagine justice being practiced by tulips? Or, free decisions being made by corn? Of course not, because all flora and fauna are impersonal beings! Incidentally, if we are looking for missing links to prove evolution, why is such little attention being given to living flora and fauna? Now, let us think about animals. Do we say, "My, that was the most virtuous rabbit I have ever seen?" Would we be distressed when it was learned that our cat uttered a string of "meow words" that were disgustingly vile and foul? Why do these things strike us as completely absurd? It is precisely

because moral virtues can be attributed only to **personal** beings? And, none of the beings we have discussed here so far—whether living or non-living beings—are personal beings! With human beings, the results would be quite different. There is a “personal center” of existence much deeper and closer to the very core of our being than rational thought, etc. This is because “rational thought” is **possessed by and performed by** a conscious subject. The “I” and “rational thought” (as well as all other conscious activities) are not, strictly speaking, identical! A self-determinate “I” can be blamed for behavior that is bad and praised for behavior that is good. Impersonal beings cannot! With these reflections we begin to grasp the utter impossibility of the “I” arising ultimately from non-living matter.

To take this a step further, consider the following:

There is a strict impossibility that any perception is grasped with a greater degree of certainty than the one who is the subject of such a perception. Since perception is an act of a conscious subject distinct from other acts of a conscious subject (such as willing, feeling, thinking, remembering, etc.), it shares the same *basic* characteristics of all such conscious activity. “I” am the one who *thinks*, who *wills*, who *feels* emotionally, who *remembers*, and who *perceives!* In spite of the fact that each perception is totally new even with reference to the same object of perception at different times, it is still one and the self-same “I” who perceives. I am always immediately aware of my own existence (and its unity) as well as my own conscious activity. The acts of consciousness which I, as a conscious subject *perform*, literally *cannot* be known with greater certainty than my own self-awareness. Such is patently absurd. Any act of consciousness presupposes a conscious subject who performs such an act.

Furthermore, one’s reason is the power and function of grasping *necessary connections*. Many things in the world could have been otherwise. The pen with which I composed this paper was red; but it could have been black (or some other color). Whatever color my pen happens to be, it could have been colored differently, but it is *necessarily* the case that my pen could not have been red all over and black all over at the at the same time and in the same sense. The necessary truth that my pen is red all over and not at the same time black all over *cannot* be a function of sense experience. Sense experience may be able to report what is the case at a *particular time*. But, sense experience is incapable of grasping what *must* be at *all times*.

Additionally, whatever criteria are used to distinguish perceived objects from one another (so as to separate illusion, delusion, and deception from reality, and one real object from another) are non-empirical and operate in the "background" of any perception. Even if I have an illusory experience, or I am either deluded or deceived, still it is "I" who have the illusory experience; it is "I" who am deluded; and it is "I" who am deceived. Any acts of a conscious subject presuppose an intuitive awareness of self-existence. And, such is known by that person both *non-empirically* and *absolutely!* To summarize, I have attempted to show that it is strictly impossible for an act of consciousness to be known with greater certainty than the *conscious performance by* and *self-existence of* the subject of those acts. In other words, I know with *undeniable certainty* that I do exist and that I perform certain conscious activities, including *acts of perception!*²⁶

Now, Dawkins could not even begin to write his books without such self-awareness. Nor could Flew, or anyone else reflect upon these questions, reason about them (correctly or incorrectly) and seek to persuade the rest of us as to their conclusions! Rationality, communication skills, discursive reasoning ability, and reflection are all marvelous conscious activities, which demand an explanation as to their origin. How much more so does this "personal center" of existence, this "I," require an explanatory source? If the information content of a simple cell shows the intelligent intervention of an informer, how much more so is it true to conclude that the "personal center" of existence requires a Person to explain it? Inanimate matter in motion can never explain the existence of the "I." In fact, the self-determinate, personal "I" that is myself, can be explained only by a Self-Determinate, Personal "I" who acted in such a way as to cause it. "I" am made in the image of the "I" who created me! Can the source be less than the effects which it produces? If the laws of the universe are unintelligible without a "Lawgiver" and if rational thought makes no sense without presupposing a Rational source, then how much more so does a "personal center" of existence require a Personal source? I agree completely with Flew's latest reflections:

Science qua science cannot furnish an argument for God's existence. But the three items of evidence we have considered in this volume—the laws of nature, life with its teleological organization, and the existence of the universe—can only be explained in the light of an Intelligence that explains both its own existence and that of the world. Such a discovery of the Divine does not come through experiments and equations, but through an understanding of the structures they unveil and map.

Now, all this might sound abstract and impersonal. How, it might be asked, do I as a person respond to the discovery of an ultimate Reality that is an omnipresent and omniscient Spirit? I must say again that the journey to my discovery of the Divine has thus far been a pilgrimage of reason. 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.²⁷

When Flew reflects just a little further on the “personal center” of his existence, he will come to recognize an undeniable truth: these reflections are but conscious acts *performed by* that “personal center” of existence. And that “personal center” is so deeply imbedded in the very core of one's being that it is completely inconceivable that it would have had an *impersonal source!*

But, let's go still further. Now that we have identified a conscious center of existence that cannot be successfully denied (every denial presupposes it; for “I” *perform* the denial), we must ask, “what are the conditions that make such conscious thought possible at all?” I have already alluded to this, but it is time now to make it explicit!

I will mention the principle of non-contradiction, a *metaphysical* principle which has important applications also in logic. Laws of logic are actually derived from the metaphysical first principles of being. That is, the laws that govern human thinking are a reflection of the necessities found in nature (reality). As such, there is an important parallel between thought, being, and language! The *metaphysical* principle is, “a being cannot both be and not be at the same time and taken in the same sense.” This principle holds even for those things which I will never see at all (such as “hell”). I know that the universe cannot both exist and not exist at the same time and taken in the same sense. Hence, any proposition I formulate about the universe logically, will be either true or false. It cannot be both. That is, if I assert, “the universe does not exist,” my assertion will be either true or false. It cannot be both! And, the reason it cannot be both true and false is because such does not

obtain in reality. If it could, then the logical principle of non-contradiction (“contradictory propositions cannot both be true”) could not hold. No one can deny this principle without appealing to the principle in order to formulate his denial. If I say, “The principle of non-contradiction is false,” then my statement is either true or false. It cannot be both true and false! And, unless I am prepared to affirm that contradictory propositions are either *always* both true or that they may *possibly* both be true, then my denial is self-defeating. Now, all *perceived objects* are distinguished on the “background” of this principle. For example, no perceived object can be both “a door” and “not a door” at one and the same time and taken in the same sense. The object is either a door or it is not! It is impossible to make distinctions in perceived objects without an intuitive awareness of the principle of non-contradiction. It is, in short, a necessary and self-evident state of affairs.²⁸

These “first principles of being” are **discovered** (not invented) by each conscious subject, without which no thought such as what we have previously described, or, communication with other conscious subjects, is possible at all! Let’s take a very simple, but normal conversation:

Bill: “How are you today?”

Bob: “Fine, thank you! And, yourself?”

Bill: “I’m doing very well.”

We can envision this being the type of conversation two people have as they leave a group meeting of some sort (church, PTA meeting, etc.). Now, Bill understands the difference between a question and a statement. He also knows that it is not both “today” and “not today.” And, he is specifically inquiring about “today.” Bob, who understands that he is asking about “today” responds with a particular reference to “today” and not some other period of time. He also understands that he has redirected the same question back to Bill. Bill responds, knowing completely the difference between “very well” and “not very well.” He has answered, “very well.” And, he fully expects Bob to understand what is being said. This type of give and take goes on all the time between conscious

subjects. We may not analyze it or think about it very deeply, but it happens nevertheless!

Now, here we have come to an awareness; **there is a subject-object encounter in every act of knowing!** And, our question is, “what accounts for the objective part of this process?” These first principles are neither invented nor subject to group consensus; rather, they are **discovered!** One might argue that they are nothing more than a by-product of matter and energy (the materialist’s position). The problem with this position is that nothing that has been described is a function of matter. Not to be outdone, the naturalist comes to the rescue. He says that such communication is merely an outgrowth of naturalistic processes, due to natural selection or “the survival of the fittest.” But, what are Bill and Bob trying to survive here? And, if such communication is important to survival, then why do not all living beings possess it? And once again we inquire, “how does conscious thought, flowing from this ‘personal center of existence,’ arise from purely naturalistic forces?” In fact, we are never compelled to ask or answer in the ways noted above. We are free to ask such questions, or, we can simply refuse to do so! Humans can also choose to resist certain very strong physical impulses and choose to do otherwise. I have a very strong craving for sweets and for other types of food. But, I can resist those cravings, as I can choose to resist any number of intense cravings.

We are therefore finally driven to inquire, “what metaphysical grounding is sufficient to explain these principles?” What explains this “self-determination?” One might still suggest that such principles are invented, or are merely a convention agreed upon by the larger group. Supposedly, though, Eastern thought does not follow the same “invented” communication or “conventions” of the group. Still, when an Easterner says that there is

no material reality, he means for us to understand what he says. And, he also means to convince us that it is not true that “there is material reality” and, at the same time, that “there is NO material reality.” It is either one or the other, but not both! When he says that there is no such thing as suffering or evil, he again seeks to convince us of these truths. And, he still appeals to first principles in spite of himself. Evil doesn’t both exist and not exist. It is, for him, one or the other. In fact, is one or the other for all of us. The same is true for suffering!

Even Postmodernists, like Rorty, Lyotard, and others, seek to convince others of the truth of Postmodernistic thought. Although they would deny that they are doing this, they appeal to the very logic they disdain and the realities they deny, in order to try to “prove” their worldview. They repudiate “metanarratives” (unifying stories that explain reality) by use of a metanarrative of their own. Such is blatant self-contradiction!

Let’s summarize: There is a personal, conscious center of existence for myself that is simply undeniable. But, to communicate with any other personal, conscious center of existence, I must utilize principles that are neither invented nor conventions of a larger group. If this is so, then what is their origin? The universe of matter and energy is not rational within itself. It “borrows” its rationality from a Rational Being, in Whom these principles are rooted and grounded. A Personal and Rational “I” is the sufficient and ultimate explanation for the personal and rational “I” that is myself. This is **the only explanation** that makes any sense at all!

¹ William Paley, *Natural Theology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: J. Vincent, 1828), *passim*.

² Richard Taylor, *Metaphysics*, 2nd ed. Foundations of Philosophy Series (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 114-115.

³ Carl Sagan, *Broca’s Brain* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 275.

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- ⁴ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v., "Life," by Carl Sagan.
- ⁵ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 278.
- ⁶ Sir Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, *Evolution From Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 150.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- ⁸ B. C. Johnson, *The Atheist Debater's Handbook* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1981), pp. 28-29.
- ⁹ Wallace I. Matson, "The Design Argument," in *Critiques of God*, ed. Peter Angeles (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1976), p. 69.
- ¹⁰ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), *passim*.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3, 17-18.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 111-112.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119. These random errors would result in mutations, which have always proven to be harmful rather than beneficial.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- ¹⁷ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), pp. 137-138.
- ¹⁸ Richard Dawkins, *Climbing Mount Improbable* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), *passim*.
- ¹⁹ Andy Knoll, PBS *Nova* Interview, May 3, 2004, all emphasis mine, D.S.
- ²⁰ Antonio Lazcano, "The Origins of Life," *Natural History* (February 2006).
- ²¹ John Maddox, *What Remains to Be Discovered* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1998), p. 252.
- ²² Antony Flew, *There is A God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, with Roy Abraham Varghese (New York: Harper One, 2007), *passim*.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.
- ²⁵ Dick Sztanyo, "The Nature of Biblical Faith—No. II," in *Studies in Hebrews*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1983), p. 477.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 475-476.
- ²⁷ Flew, *There is a God*, p. 155.
- ²⁸ Sztanyo, "The Nature of Biblical Faith," pp. 474-475.