

Evidence for the existence of God

A number of philosophical arguments have been put forward for the existence of God. Some of these are referred to as arguments from design. Does the complexity of our world, of human persons, of our mind and language, somehow point to a designer? The question is disputed; arguments are put forward on both sides and some of these arguments have become increasingly philosophically sophisticated. We cannot go into them all here, but they are thought-provoking if nothing else. A variant on these arguments is sometimes referred to as the “fine tuning” argument. Certain constants in physics (such as the ratio between the strengths of the forces of gravity to electromagnetism) must lie in a very, very narrow range for there to have been any possibility of life to emerge in our universe. And, as it turns out, these physical constants do in fact lie in this very narrow range, and we do indeed have life. Physics does not dictate these constants be any particular value, yet they occupy this narrow range that is required for life. Is this itself evidence of a creator?

Other philosophical arguments for the existence of God concern what is sometimes called an argument for a “first cause.” The arguments generally run something along the lines of the following: if every event has a cause, then, if we are to avoid an infinite regress of causes, there must have been a first cause. Was this God? Similar arguments involve matter or time rather than causes. So far as I understand it, there is also general consensus in physics that the universe had a definite beginning; and that an infinitely expanding and contracting universe is not possible as it would not be consistent with the second law of thermodynamics (which entails increasing entropy). If the universe had a beginning, who or what set the universe in motion to begin with? Again, was this God? As I see it, many of these arguments concerning an infinite regress, or the beginning of the universe, boil down to the question, ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ Or, ‘Is God a more plausible hypothesis than a self-explanatory universe?’ Different people do interpret the evidence differently and answer these questions in different ways, but the questions and arguments are nevertheless suggestive and worth considering.