

Kreeft on the Design Argument

An interesting fact about presuppositionalists is that few attempt to rely exclusively on the “transcendental argument.” Typically you may find that a presuppositionalist begins his case by using some form of “TAG,” only to digress to more traditional types of theistic defenses. Although Cornelius Van Til insisted that there was only *one* argument suitable to proving the existence of the Christian god, his pupil, John Frame, famously disagrees. For instance, Frame states:

I question whether the transcendental argument can function without the help of subsidiary arguments of a more traditional kind. Although I agree with Van Til’s premise that without God there is no meaning, I must grant that not everyone would immediately agree with this premise. How, then, is that premise to be proved? Is it that the meaning-laden character of creation requires a sort of designer? That is the traditional teleological argument. Is it that the meaning-structure of reality requires an efficient cause? That is the traditional cosmological argument. Is it that meaning entails values, which in turn entail a valuer? That is the traditional values argument. (*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 71)

Frame holds that “the traditional arguments often work... because... they presuppose a Christian worldview” (Ibid, pp. 71-72) - which, by the way, can only mean that these arguments would beg the question in such a case - and also that “the transcendental argument requires supplementation by other arguments” (Ibid., p. 73).

One of the arguments which Frame indicates above is the *design argument*, a very common traditional theistic argument which seeks to conclude that a god exists because “design” is allegedly evident in objects not created by human beings. The existence of a “designer” - specifically a supernatural being thought to be identical to a religious believer’s object of worship - is said to explain this prevalence of design.

Popular Christian apologist Peter Kreeft has published [his version of the design argument](#) on his website. It comes from his book *Fundamentals of the Faith: Essays in Christian Apologetics*.

I remember this kind of argument from my pre-teen years: “You can’t have design without a designer,” I was once told. Even at that age, I was impressed by how much someone holding this view took for granted.

Kreeft outlines the basics of the argument as follows:

The argument starts with the major premise that where there is design, there must be a designer. The minor premise is the existence of design throughout the universe. The conclusion is that there must be a universal designer.

Kreeft’s rendition of the design argument is pretty standard. We find essentially the same argument on p. 95 of Geisler & Turek’s *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, where the design argument is presented as a formal syllogism:

1. Every design had a designer.
2. The universe has highly complex design.
3. Therefore, the universe had a Designer.

Now when I first read Kreeft’s assertion of “the existence of design throughout the universe,” I was reminded of how often Christian apologists make a stink whenever a non-believer makes a claim to the effect that some specific feature exists “throughout the universe.” Were I to make the kind of claim that Kreeft does on behalf of my non-Christian position, I’d expect Christians of all persuasions to raise an objection: “How could you possibly know what exists throughout the universe? You’re not omniscient! You’re not God!” Ron Rhodes, for instance, raises just this kind of objection against atheism:

Some atheists categorically state that there is no God, and all atheists, by definition, believe it. And yet, this assertion is logically indefensible. A person would have to be omniscient and omnipresent to be able to say from his own pool of knowledge that there is no God. Only someone who is capable of being in all places at the same time - with a perfect knowledge of all that is in the universe - can make such a

statement based on the facts. To put it another way, a person would have to be God in order to say there is no God. ([Strategies for Dialoguing with Atheists](#))

Of course, this kind of objection misses the point that we can know that there are no gods for the same reasons that we know there are no square circles (as I explain [here](#)). Certainly Rhodes would not require us to be omniscient in order to reject the claim that square circles can exist, would he?

But unlike the recognition that contradictions do not exist in reality, Kreeft's claim is positive in nature, affirming that everything "throughout the universe" exhibits a certain feature, namely *design*. Should we flare our nostrils and shake our fists, exclaiming that he would have to be omniscient to know this, and that being non-omniscient, we have no choice but to accept this premise on faith? No, I suggest a more sober approach. Kreeft is weaving a rope. Let's just sit back and watch him put it around his own neck.

Throughout his paper, Kreeft focuses primarily on validating his argument's first premise (that "where there is design, there must be a designer") without paying much mind to the argument's more controversial minor premise ("the existence of design throughout the universe"). Thus he reasons:

Why must we believe the major premise, that all design implies a designer? Because everyone admits this principle in practice.

Okay, "everybody admits this principle in practice." I guess Rhodes would again raise the objection that we'd need to be omniscient to know what "everyone admits... in practice." Perhaps he would be right: after all, there are some five or six billion people in the world. How could either Kreeft or I or anyone else know what principles they all "admit... in practice"? Rhodesian protestations aside, it seems reasonable enough, but then again it is rather vague. I "admit" that my house was designed (Kreeft probably thought I'd resist this?). I "admit" that my car was designed. I "admit" that the internals of my flat screen TV were designed. Etc. And in each case, I'm happy to suppose that someone (or a group of someones) designed these things.

The premise is easy to concede in the case of man-made objects such as these. But Kreeft wants to say this about *everything* in the universe, particularly with respect to objects that are not man-made, which is a much taller claim.

Let's take for example a snowflake. I remember once being told that all snowflakes are six-pointed, and also that no two snowflakes are identical. Every snowflake is unique in its specific structure. (I can hear Rhodes' breath starting to heave.) I guess finding a seven-pointed snowflake would be like finding a four-leaf clover: Good luck! Though I am no expert on snowflake chemistry, my understanding is that snowflakes can in fact take different shapes (not necessarily six-pointed), and that this is influenced by temperature, the presence of dust particles, humidity, air currents, and other relevant factors. However, a symmetrical hexagonal shape is very common, and this I understand is due to the molecular structure of ice crystals. Under certain conditions, and barring the presence of contaminating elements, a snowflake can look as if it were designed in a Silicon Valley clean room: perfectly symmetrical, delicately ornate, intricate as the finest doily.

But if a snowflake is an example of something exhibiting "design," then I see no reason why nature cannot be a "designer" of sorts all its own. Here nature, through the non-intentional causation of an element's internal chemistry, can as a result produce symmetry and complexity relevantly similar to what we find in man-made objects which were designed. Could it be that some of the "design" which Kreeft and other theists want to see "throughout the universe" is really nothing more than nature left to its own devices?

I suspect that Kreeft would be dissatisfied with this conclusion. The design argument typically expects us to imagine a (one, not more than one) *conscious being* as the "designer" implied by the existence of anything which purportedly exhibits design, whether man-made (like a house) or naturally occurring (like a snowflake). But if that's the case, it seems that this designer would be pretty darn busy designing all the snowflakes which are falling somewhere on the earth at any moment. And that's a lot of snowflakes! Last December there was record-breaking snowfall in Portland, Oregon (cornnuts, anyone?). It was one of those thirty-year storms, said one local (with global warming, the guy must have been crazy from the heat). I have no idea how many snowflakes fell during the occasion, but the designer must have put in a lot of overtime designing every one of those little things. Well, it's an eternal designer, so it's apparently got the time, and it's an omnipotent designer, so apparently it's up to the task. Come on, imagine with me, folks! Of course, I wonder why any conscious being would undertake such an

activity, even if it could accomplish it with the snap of a finger. (Oh, sorry, it doesn't have fingers?) But the question at this point would be: What would it accomplish, in the larger scheme of things, by doing all this? It seems so much like government make-work: a whole lot of effort to get nothing of any real value done. After all, those little snowflakes are going to fall to the ground, their expert design never noticed by anyone else, and then melt away into oblivion. So it all seems for naught, if this is the product of intentional design.

But Kreeft had an example of his own. Keep in mind that he's still focusing on validating his argument's initial premise, that "where there is design, there is a designer." He writes:

For instance, suppose you came upon a deserted island and found "S.O.S." written in the sand on the beach. You would not think the wind or the waves had written it by mere chance but that someone had been there, someone intelligent enough to design and write the message. If you found a stone hut on the island with windows, doors, and a fireplace, you would not think a hurricane had piled up the stones that way by chance. You immediately infer a designer when you see design.

If I came upon an island which was said to be deserted and found these things, the first thing I would suppose is that the claim that the island is deserted was not true, that it may have been true at some point, but that it lacked some new information. Yes, I'd think that there was a person on the island who was responsible for these things, who "designed" them.

But so what? If we're supposed to swallow the line about "the existence of design throughout the universe," why does Kreeft need to add the part about "S.O.S." being written on the sand of an island (which is said to be "deserted") or "a stone hut... with windows, doors and a fireplace"? I'd think that, if it were true that everything "throughout the universe" exhibited design, Kreeft could easily say "suppose you came upon a deserted island," and suggest that evidence of it having been designed were obvious right off the bat in the natural features existing on the island, without citing features which are clearly man-made. No, instead, he throws something that is obviously "designed" (the "S.O.S." written on the sand and the stone hut) *against a backdrop that we would not think of as "designed"* (at least in Kreeft's desired sense - i.e., "designed" by some intelligent being). Kreeft would look pretty silly if instead he wrote, "suppose you came upon a deserted island and found a bunch of sand, some palm trees, some of them fallen, plants growing all over the place, rocks jutting out of the soil, clouds in the sky, wind blowing around, etc." and then proposed that "you would not think that the wind or the waves had put the island and plants and debris there by mere chance, but that someone had been there, someone intelligent enough to design the island and arrange the flowers in no discernible pattern." In such a case, I would not assume that what we're looking at was "designed." That Kreeft does not frame his examples in this manner suggests that deep down, he doesn't either. But this is what his second premise would need us to believe.

To help make his point (namely the point that objects exhibiting design imply the existence of a designer), Kreeft fashioned the following dialogue between two scientists observing a moon rocket blasting off into space. Kreeft calls one of the scientists "a believer" and the other "an unbeliever." Here's what he has them say to each other:

Believer scientist: "Isn't it wonderful that our rocket is going to hit the moon by chance?"

Unbeliever scientist: "What do you mean, chance? We put millions of manhours of design into that rocket."

Believer scientist: "Oh, you don't think chance is a good explanation for the rocket? Then why do you think it's a good explanation for the universe? There's much more design in a universe than in a rocket. We can design a rocket, but we couldn't design a whole universe. I wonder who can?"

Wouldn't it be nice to have a gift for writing dialogue as eloquent as this? Apparently in Kreeft's view the universe is analogous to a rocket which was designed to accomplish a specific purpose. I wonder what purpose he thinks the universe was designed to accomplish. Perhaps we can imagine that it was designed to "glorify" its designer somehow?

But that's not all. It gets better yet. Kreeft continues the scenario:

Later that day the two were strolling down a street and passed an antique store. The atheist admired a picture in the window and asked, "I wonder who painted that picture?" "No one," joked the believer; "it just

happened by chance."

Boy, that believer scientist really made his point. Or did he? If ridicule and sarcasm are all that the believing scientist has for his position, it must be pretty weak indeed. After all, I've so far not seen any argument for the claim that "there's much more design in a universe than in a rocket." (Again, Rhodes must be over-boiling by now.) Does Kreeft have knowledge of this design which he thinks is in the universe? Does he have any evidence to show that the universe was designed? If so, why does he withhold it? Astronomers have been mapping the stars for millennia, and constantly they're discovering new things. Apparently Kreeft's got all the goods, and he's holding out. If he feels that everyone who doesn't suppose that the universe was designed is wrong, why doesn't he whip it out and show everyone? Or, can he? Is it the case that he's simply claiming that the universe is designed, but has no knowledge of what this design is? Is he just calling every discovery scientists make a product of "design" after the fact, without any objective support for such assessments? In the case of a rocket intended to shoot for the moon, we can validate the supposition that it was designed, specifically by human beings. But can we do this in the case of all the things we find on a deserted island? Kreeft hasn't even begun to make good on this claim, which is crucial to his theistic conclusion.

Then Kreeft asks a most telling question:

Is it possible that design happens by chance without a designer?

The answer is: Of course not. We find evidence of design in the case of man-made objects. I know of no atheist who would deny this. And in the case of man-made objects, we can rationally infer a designer (or group of designers). But how does this help Kreeft's overall argument? He still needs to validate his claim regarding "the existence of design throughout the universe." He still needs to show that the universe as such was designed. Without validating this premise incontestably, his design argument is DOA - i.e., defeated on affirmation. Can Kreeft show that at least one object that we find in the universe which is clearly *not* man-made was designed? Can he show that it was designed *supernaturally*? If not, how does he expect to validate the more controversial premise of his argument?

Kreeft then does what theistic apologists so often do when they get desperate: he starts citing probability statistics. Kreeft writes:

There is perhaps one chance in a trillion that "S.O.S." could be written in the sand by the wind.

Kreeft does not show how he calculated these odds, but let's suppose he's correct. Let's suppose it's extremely improbable that the wind or other natural (specifically non-volitional) forces could carve "S.O.S." into the sand on the beach. I've already pointed out that the claim that the island in question is deserted is probably mistaken, and that a human being is responsible for the writing we see on the beach. But if we're compelled for some unknown reason to suppose that there are no human beings on the island, is "one chance in a trillion" really so difficult to swallow? Pull out your wallet and open it up. If you have a government-issued bank note in there, you're literally holding "one in a trillion" in your hot little hands. Consider all the trillions of bank notes which have been in circulation throughout the world, and out of all of them this particular one happened to find its way into your wallet. What are the odds??? Should we suppose that this as the work of a designer who intended you to have precisely that specific dollar in your hands?

Kreeft asks:

But who would use a one-in-a-trillion explanation?

If we're still talking about the "S.O.S." written in the sand of a beach, and the "one-in-a-trillion explanation" is the one which posits it as the result of surf and wind, I don't see why we would need to use it. Kreeft's illustration, however, hinges on the supposition that the island where this beach is located is "deserted." But he does not explain how we know this, or why this could not be mistaken. After all, would we expect to see "S.O.S." written in the sands of an island known to be populated? The "S.O.S." could be telling us that someone has been stranded on what was thought to be a deserted island.

Kreeft then gave the following analogy:

Someone once said that if you sat a million monkeys at a million typewriters for a million years, one of

them would eventually type out all of *Hamlet* by chance. But when we find the text of *Hamlet*, we don't wonder whether it came from chance and monkeys.

I too would be highly skeptical if someone claimed that *Hamlet* were the product of a million monkeys seated before a million typewriters for a million years (and not only because type writers have not been around for a million years). But what's the point here? Specifically, to what is Kreeft's scenario supposed to be analogous? Kreeft tells us with his very next question:

Why then does the atheist use that incredibly improbable explanation for the universe?

Now it is true that I am an atheist, but where have I provided an "explanation for the universe" which is at all analogous to a million monkeys sitting in front of a million typewriters for a million years putting out *Hamlet*? The only way in which any "explanation for the universe" could bear any resemblance to such an illustration is if it posited the universe as a product of something coming before it. But I have not posited such a view in the first place. Rather, my view is that the universe is the sum total of all that exists, that there is nothing beyond it, and that it is not the product or result of some prior activity (see for instance [here](#)). So apparently Kreeft has a different atheist in mind here, as my position makes no such claims and is thus immune to such criticisms.

Kreeft gives his own answer to his question:

Clearly, because it is his only chance of remaining an atheist.

That's interesting. I don't "use that incredibly improbable explanation for the universe," but I'm still an atheist. Apparently this bothers someone like Kreeft. Ever wonder why?

Kreeft continues:

At this point we need a psychological explanation of the atheist rather than a logical explanation of the universe.

No, at this point, Kreeft needs to broaden his horizons, and maybe rummage up enough courage to start adding to his reading list. For clearly he supposes that atheists necessarily view the universe as a product or result of some prior activity, but this is simply not the case. Indeed, it is in religion where we find the view that the universe is the product of prior activity. To insist that atheism necessarily affirms that the universe is the product of prior activity, indulges in straw man tactics. If atheism were truly flawed, such fallacious tactics would not be necessary.

Kreeft then asserts:

We have a logical explanation of the universe, but the atheist does not like it. It's called God.

How does Kreeft know what someone else likes or doesn't like? And why should it matter? Is Kreeft tacitly informing us that he holds to the view that "God did it" because he *does* like it? After all, in spite of what he says, Kreeft has not shown this to be "a logical explanation of the universe." What were his premises? How did he validate them? If his argument for "God did it" is that we infer a designer when we see "S.O.S." written in the sand of a beach, I guess there are weaker arguments, but this one is really up there.

Again, I'm still waiting for Kreeft to address his minor premise, remember that one? It asserts "the existence of design throughout the universe." So far he's left it on the chill. Without a defense for this premise, his argument sinks.

Instead of validating that premise, Kreeft focuses on the human brain:

There is one especially strong version of the argument from design that hits close to home because it's about the design of the very thing we use to think about design: our brains. The human brain is the most complex piece of design in the known universe. In many ways it is like a computer. Now just suppose there were a computer that was programmed only by chance. For instance, suppose you were in a plane and the public-address system announced that there was no pilot, but the plane was being flown by a computer that had been programmed by a random fall of hailstones on its keyboard or by a baseball player in spiked shoes dancing on computer cards. How much confidence would you have in that plane? But if our brain computer

has no cosmic intelligence behind the heredity and environment that program it, why should we trust it when it tells us about anything, even about the brain?

Kreeft demonstrates that he cannot wean himself off his habit of arguing for his position on the basis of a false dichotomy and using it to denigrate the position he despises. This is a very common apologetic debating maneuver. For Kreeft, the brain is either the product of supernatural design, or it's the product of "chance," a term used more for its connotative effect than any appropriateness it might have (for in fact, it may not be appropriate at all, as I show [here](#)).

Yes, human brains are very complex, there's no doubt about it. But it is informative to note the similarity between human brains and those of other mammals. It is also interesting to note how the "design" of the human brain and every other feature of the human organism is contained in an acid, namely DNA. The same is the case with other biological organisms. Curiously, man is not unique in this respect. Moreover, the illustrious Christian apologist Peter Pike tells us himself [why DNA is Information](#). That is, a *physical substance* is information. DNA is a molecule, composed of atoms, essentially a chemical. As such, it is physical. If DNA is information, then information is physical. So the information which provides living organisms with their growth instructions is in fact a physical substance. And since DNA can be extremely complex itself, there's no reason to suppose that it is not capable of being used by an organism's autonomic functions as a source for instructions in the development of complex organs, like the human brain.

The engine behind all this development and replication of patterns stored in DNA is not "supernatural intelligence" or "chance," but *causality*, the very factor which Kreeft's false dichotomy seeks to squelch out of consideration, even out of existence. Biologists, who are scientists who actually study these things, have made tremendous strides in progress toward understanding how this all works. Kreeft's argument, however, depends on all this being utterly mysterious, serving as a gap into which he can insert his "God did it" claim. Going with Kreeft's view will not move us any closer to understanding the nature of the universe, the development of the human brain, or how our minds function. On the contrary, it will simply leave us suspended in a perpetual state of arrested darkness. All he is interested in doing is validating his belief in something which is stuck in his imagination. His design argument will not push it into existence.

Moreover, Kreeft nowhere validates the assumption, necessary for his case, that the human brain was ever "designed" by some intelligent being in the first place. And he can't. That's why he relies on the false dichotomy he's deployed. Instead of validating this premise, he expects it to prevail by default by pitting it against a position which he explicitly associates with analogies and illustrations which are so miserable and degrading, that no one would want to affirm it. But this device in no way validates his preferred alternative, and when it is discovered that his dichotomy actually suppresses the proper alternative, Kreeft is exposed as a fool for his invisible magic being.

But Kreeft still has faith in the design argument. Here he unveils another of its sorry applications:

Another specially strong aspect of the design argument is the so-called anthropic principle, according to which the universe seems to have been specially designed from the beginning for human life to evolve.

Here Kreeft is simply begging the question by assuming what his argument is supposed to prove. Remember, he still hasn't validated his minor premise, which affirms "the existence of design throughout the universe." To say that "the universe seems to have been specially designed from the beginning for human life to evolve" is to make a highly generalized statement about *all* the universe, not just the small part of it which is accessible to our close inspection. How does Kreeft acquire knowledge of everything in the universe which justifies such pronouncements? Not surprisingly, he does not say. Then again, who holds that "the universe seems to have been specially designed from the beginning for human life to evolve"? So far as anyone knows, human life exists only right here on tiny insignificant little Planet Earth, not throughout the universe. And the earth certainly does not appear to have been "designed." Go back to Kreeft's initial desert island analogy: notice that he did *not* say

suppose you come to a deserted island and see palm trees, bushes, plants, fallen tree trunks, rocks, sand, hills, more rocks, sand, trees, hills, palm leaves, etc. Now wouldn't you automatically suppose it was designed?

No, of course he didn't say this. And it's not because he has a better angle (for his ultimate conclusion requires

that the deserted island itself was designed, along with the rest of the universe), but because he knows it wouldn't fly. That he needs to put on his "deserted island" something which obviously bears the signature of *man* in order to float the idea of design, only tells me that he needs something on the island that *is* designed in contrast to things which obviously are not designed in order to get his argument off the ground. This move is ultimately self-defeating given the desired conclusion of his argument (which, again, would entail that the whole island itself was designed), since the "designed" part stands out so conspicuously against the background of surroundings which were not designed. Put any human artifact on the deserted island in order to argue for non-human (or "super-human") design, and the argument draws attention to its own weakness.

Begging the question, as Kreeft does by invoking the anthropic principle, does his argument no favors, especially when he grants that human life evolved! If human life evolved, it evolved by adapting to its environment from its own resources rather than the environment having been pre-adapted to its needs.

Kreeft then gives us another of his unsupported assertions to make the opposing position seem just too improbable (a favorite tactic of his):

If the temperature of the primal fireball that resulted from the Big Bang some fifteen to twenty billion years ago, which was the beginning of our universe, had been a trillionth of a degree colder or hotter, the carbon molecule that is the foundation of all organic life could never have developed.

How does Kreeft know this? To affirm this with any credibility, he'd have to know what "the temperature of the primal fireball that resulted from the Big Bang" was, and then show that any other temperature would have had the deleterious effects he claims for it. But Kreeft provides no such support. Rather, it appears he's just making things up as he goes to serve his own preferred position. Such practice does not recommend itself. Moreover, even if it were the case that the preconditions for the formation of the carbon molecule were in fact as delicate as Kreeft states, why suppose that it was impossible for those preconditions to come about, simply because they seem improbable? Improbable and impossible are two very different concepts. What justifies the supposition, necessary to Kreeft's argument, that these preconditions were themselves the product of "design"? Kreeft offers nothing to validate this supposition whatsoever.

But Kreeft tries his hand at it again:

The number of possible universes is trillions of trillions; only one of them could support human life: this one.

Kreeft is trying to assert any alternative to theism out of the realm of possibility by controlling the kind of background assumptions allowed on the table. But it crumbles with the slightest of scrutiny. Who says "the number of possible universes is trillions of trillions"? Does Kreeft place possibility before actuality, such that whatever happens to be actual is just a lucky lottery winner? I'm afraid it doesn't work that way. Possibility is an epistemological concept pertaining to assessments of knowledge claims, not a metaphysical phenomenon predating existence (as if existence were not eternal). There is only one universe, and it is what it is regardless of how puzzled someone like Kreeft may be by it. The "possible universes" which Kreeft has in mind are in fact merely imaginary, nothing more. They don't exist, and they were not "options" participating in some giddy beauty contest before the "Big Bang." Besides, even if one does grant legitimacy to Kreeft's claim that "the number of possible universes is trillions of trillions," what justifies his additional claim that "only one of them could support human life"? Why can't a few billion of those "possible universes" out of the whole mix support human life? Kreeft indicates no reason why we should not entertain this possibility.

The reason why Kreeft affirms the notion of "possible universes" in this manner, is to make the state of affairs which actually exists seem all the more unlikely. It's clear that he needs the actually existing state of affairs to seem extremely unlikely ("one in a trillion"), because this is vital to his implicit reasoning, which is: the more unlikely the state of affairs happens to be, the more we need to think of that state of affairs as the product of a designer. Of course, Kreeft never spells out how exactly this conclusion is supposed to follow. Instead, he relies on a series of contrived analogies involving artifacts which are obviously of human origin and thus products of design as a substitute for providing the details of this would-be inference. Of course, human artifacts, like a writing system or a house, exhibit "design," but they do not point to a supernatural designer, which is what Kreeft needs. What Kreeft needs to show us is that things like rocks exhibit design and that they point to a supernatural designer, but he never attempts this.

After stacking the deck with his “possible universes” notion, Kreeft suggests that the actually existing universe, as an outcome of some process by which all the other “trillions and trillions” of “possible universes” were eliminated (a process about which Kreeft demonstrates no knowledge whatsoever), “sounds suspiciously like a plot.” Actually, it sounds suspiciously like Kreeft is anxious to construe the present state of affairs as just too improbable to exist without the hand of some invisible magic designer being responsible for it all. Unfortunately, Kreeft never explains how this is supposed to follow intelligibly from his scenarios of unlikelihood. His “argument” comes across as if we were supposed to conclude that a god exists due to the manufactured outrage resulting from considering any alternative to theism.

Kreeft continues:

If the cosmic rays had bombarded the primordial slime at a slightly different angle or time or intensity, the hemoglobin molecule, necessary for all warm-blooded animals, could never have evolved.

Presumably the thinking here is that the cosmic rays needed a cosmic radiologist who precisely aimed the rays at a specific angle, for a specific duration of time and at a specific intensity, otherwise “the hemoglobin molecule... could never have evolved.” The beaming of cosmic rays, on this view, was executed specifically with the evolution of hemoglobin in mind.

This line of argument commits a fundamental reversal: it implies that the cosmic rays and their angle, duration and intensity were purposed to suit the needs of hemoglobin, as if cosmic rays were pre-arranged to meet those needs. But this only begs the question, for this is precisely what Kreeft needs to prove in order to validate his claim that the universe had a designer. Could it not be the case that the nature of hemoglobin and other biological attributes evolved under certain conditions, including those pertaining to Kreeft’s cosmic rays, such that they adapted to the conditions of their environment? In spite of the fact that adaptation is a key factor in evolutionary theory, Kreeft nowhere rules this possibility out. He does not even consider it. But why not, especially given the premise of the view he needs to unseat, namely that biological organisms evolve and adapt to the conditions of their environment (or simply die out)?

Kreeft follows this up with the usual odds assessment:

The chance of this molecule’s evolving is something like one in a trillion trillion.

Apparently “trillion” is the number which seems to work for Kreeft (he’s beginning to remind me of Barack Obama). But where did Kreeft get these figures? How would someone go about trying to calculate the probability of anything evolving? Kreeft clearly wants his readers to think that the formation of molecules is a crap shoot. But in fact, this is not what science tells us. “Biochemistry is not chance,” affirms the [Talk Origins Archive](#) (ed. [Mark Isaak](#)). As we saw above, biochemistry operates on the law of causality. It’s not merely a roll of the dice or a card chosen at random, as Kreeft seems to think. Moreover, Ian Musgrave, a biomedical researcher from Australia, explains that

the formation of biological polymers from monomers is a function of the laws of chemistry and biochemistry, and these are decidedly *not* random. ([Lies, Damned Lies, Statistics, and Probability of Abiogenesis Calculations](#))

Also, it seems that Kreeft would have to have extremely intimate knowledge of the conditions in which such molecules did evolve, for the vast range of variables which come into play would be key to such calculation, and Kreeft provides no indication that he has such knowledge. Was he there? Does he have samples from the prebiotic earth which confirm his estimates? How could he? How could anyone? Mark Isaak explains:

A calculation of the odds of abiogenesis is worthless unless it recognizes the immense range of starting materials that the first replicator might have formed from, the probably innumerable different forms that the first replicator might have taken, and the fact that much of the construction of the replicating molecule would have been non-random to start with. ([Five Major Misconceptions about Evolution](#))

If the earliest life forms were generated in the earth’s oceans, for example, all the oceans served as the primordial “vat” in which countless opportunities for the earliest polymers to form from monomers would have existed. So even if we accept the odds of “a trillion trillion” for a particular molecule’s formation at a particular moment in a

particular place, there's no reason to suppose that the conditions could not have allowed for this on a multiple scale - i.e., throughout a very long span of time and throughout all the oceans, thus providing "trillions" of opportunities for the needed biochemical combinations. How many molecules make up the world's oceans? How many molecules made up the oceans of the prebiotic world? Each of those molecules is "one in a trillion trillion," perhaps even more than this. And since "biochemistry is not chance," but a function of causality, why should we accept Kreeft's fantastical premises?

In fact, I question whether or not it is even sensible to speak of *molecules* as such evolving in the first place. I may be wrong here, but it seems that biological species are what evolve, while molecules are formed naturally in the universe by the atomic attraction of their constituents. If this is correct, then Kreeft's conjectures about the "evolution" of molecules is even more off than I had originally supposed.

As for Kreeft's "one in a trillion trillion," maybe that's earth. On a macro-scale, perhaps there are trillions of other places throughout the universe which have participated in Kreeft's imaginary lottery, and earth was the lucky winner. So even on his terms, we need not conclude the existence of a "designer."

Kreeft admits that

There is very good scientific evidence for the evolving, ordered appearance of species, from simple to complex.

But in spite of this admission (one which many theists outright deny), Kreeft wants to see it as "a beautiful example of design, a great clue to God." This is to be expected from a theist: the theistic mind is accustomed to imagining an invisible magic being "back of" everything which one observes in the world. So if it is admitted that there is evidence for evolution among the biological species, a theist can still be expected to posit the guiding hand of a designer behind it all, a designer which exists only in his imagination. This can only mean that Kreeft's overall "argument" is simply a sham. Whatever the state of affairs may be, one will always be able to imagine that a "designer" is responsible for it all.

In reacting to a *non-theistic* conception of evolution, Kreeft displays his ignorance quite openly:

there is no scientific proof of natural selection as the mechanism of evolution, Natural selection "explains" the emergence of higher forms without intelligent design by the survival-of-the-fittest principle. But this is sheer theory.

Kreeft is a fine one to talk. What proof has he provided for his assertion of "the existence of design throughout the universe"? He's given none whatsoever (let alone *scientific* proof). In fact, it is almost as if he were unaware of the fact that one of his argument's premises affirms "the existence of design throughout the universe." If he thinks that alleged astronomical odds against something occurring somehow counts as evidence for the existence of a designer of the universe, this has been answered. For one, highly improbable things do in fact happen all the time (such as a unique bank note finding its way into your wallet), and for another, calculation of the odds of something occurring requires detailed information about the conditions in which that something is said to have occurred, and Kreeft has not demonstrated knowledge of such details when it comes to the origin of life on the prebiotic earth. Also, even if he had, such calculations would be moot for there's no reason to suppose that organic molecules had only *one* chance to form in prebiotic earth environments.

As for Kreeft's claim that "there is no scientific proof of natural selection as the mechanism of evolution," this is so incorrect that one can be forgiven for counting it as a sheer fabrication on Kreeft's part. There is an abundance of evidence proving natural selection as the evolutionary mechanism, but creation-theists typically suppress this evidence in favor of their religious faith commitments. Isaak points out that

Biologists define evolution as a change in the gene pool of a population over time. One example is insects developing a resistance to pesticides over the period of a few years. Even most Creationists recognize that evolution at this level is a fact... The origin of new species by evolution has also been observed, both in the laboratory and in the wild... Even without these direct observations, it would be wrong to say that evolution hasn't been observed. Evidence isn't limited to seeing something happen before your eyes. Evolution makes predictions about what we would expect to see in the fossil record, comparative anatomy, genetic sequences, geographical distribution of species, etc., and these predictions have been verified many times

over. The number of observations supporting evolution is overwhelming... What hasn't been observed is one animal abruptly changing into a radically different one, such as a frog changing into a cow. This is not a problem for evolution because evolution doesn't propose occurrences even remotely like that. In fact, if we ever observed a frog turn into a cow, it would be very strong evidence *against* evolution. ([Five Major Misconceptions About Evolution](#))

For support, Isaak cites an article by J.R. Weinberg, V.R. Starczak, and D. Jorg titled "Evidence for rapid speciation following a founder event in the laboratory," published in *Evolution* 46, pp. 1214-1220. He also provides a link to Joseph Boxhorn's [Observed Instances of Speciation](#), which details some examples.

Isaak also answers Kreeft's claim that natural selection is merely a theory:

Calling the theory of evolution "only a theory" is, strictly speaking, true, but the idea it tries to convey is completely wrong. The argument rests on a confusion between what "theory" means in informal usage and in a scientific context. A theory, in the scientific sense, is "a coherent group of general propositions used as principles of explanation for a class of phenomena" [Random House American College Dictionary]. The term does not imply tentativeness or lack of certainty. Generally speaking, scientific theories differ from scientific laws only in that laws can be expressed more tersely. Being a theory implies self-consistency, agreement with observations, and usefulness. (Creationism fails to be a theory mainly because of the last point; it makes few or no specific claims about what we would expect to find, so it can't be used for anything. When it does make falsifiable predictions, they prove to be false.) ([Five Major Misconceptions About Evolution](#))

I don't suppose Kreeft would claim that gravity is merely a theory, would he? If not, why does he do so in the case of natural selection? Is Kreeft in the habit of special pleading his case?

Kreeft then asks the following question:

There is no evidence that abstract, theoretical thinking or altruistic love make it easier for man to survive. How did they evolve then?

This is confusion. As pointed out above, the theory of evolution is intended to explain changes in the gene pool of a population over time, not the development of "abstract, theoretical thinking" or so-called "altruistic love" (as if altruism were premised on or compatible with love). These topics are properly addressed in the field known as *philosophy*.

Of course, why suppose that there is no evidence suggesting that the conceptual level of cognition ("abstract, theoretical thinking") aids human survival? Given man's ability to form concepts, he can generalize from specific instances and identify causal connections. This allows him, for instance, to forecast seasonal change and prepare for colder months. Without this preparation, made possible by his ability to conceptualize, the chances that he will not survive the next snowstorm would increase. Man's conceptual cognition enables him to identify goals explicitly, fashion tools which help him achieve those goals, and build structures which make the achievement of those goals all the more likely. The evolutionary advantage of the conceptual level of cognition is inestimable. But Kreeft seems oblivious to all this. On his worldview, man's use of his mind is geared exclusively to calculating how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

As for so-called "altruistic love," I agree that such a notion provides no value for man. Indeed, it leads to man's destruction rather than to survival. Consider Christianity: it is through "altruistic love" that Jesus, the perfect man, sacrificed himself for the sake of imperfect people. Altruism seeks the sacrifice of value for the sake of lesser values or non-values. Altruism is the engine by which an entire nation of individuals will enslave itself to the insanity of a dictator, inspiring the collective to throw itself on its own sword as the dictator calls the shots from elegantly furnished offices far from the front lines.

Kreeft then indicates the infinite regress implicit in the design argument:

Furthermore, could the design that obviously now exists in man and in the human brain come from something with less or no design? Such an explanation violates the principle of causality, which states that you can't get more in the effect than you had in the cause. If there is intelligence in the effect (man),

there must be intelligence in the cause.

This only suggests that whatever allegedly designed man and the human brain, must itself have been designed. If man must be the product of a designer because intelligence must be the result of design, then the intelligence which authored that design must itself be the result of design, and so on. Did Kreeft intend to suggest this? I highly doubt it. But if intelligence as such requires a designer, then Kreeft's designing god, if it has any intelligence, must itself be the product of a prior designer. But when does it stop? Kreeft's own premise here requires that it can never stop, *ad infinitum*. What rational satisfaction does this promise?

Kreeft then interjects:

But a universe ruled by blind chance has no intelligence.

The universe is merely the sum of everything which exists. It is not a distinct entity unto its own. It certainly is not an entity possessing consciousness. Since consciousness is a precondition of intelligence, objecting that the universe has no intelligence misses the point of the concept. The concept 'universe' satisfies a legitimate conceptual need by including everything which exists (both known and unknown) into a single cognitive unit. It is a mistake to condemn the sum of everything which exists for not possessing intelligence.

Does this therefore mean, as Kreeft apparently wants us to think, that the universe is therefore "ruled by blind chance"? Not at all. As I pointed out above, I've already dealt with this faith-based error (see [here](#)). On a rational understanding of reality, the alternative to intelligence is not "chance," but some other type of causation. When wind blows a pile of leaves into the street, is this "intelligence"? I know of no reason to suppose that it is; wind is not an intelligent organism. Is it therefore "chance"? Of course not: the wind did the causing. According to John Frame's [A Van Til Glossary](#), the concept 'chance' denotes "events that occur without cause or reason." Since the wind blowing is the cause of the leaves' scattering, this could not be an example of "chance". But don't worry: you can point this simple truth out to theistic apologists until you're blue in the face, but they will continue to repeat this error as if it were unchallengeable. What defenders of the design argument seem to forget is quite simply what an intelligent being does do with fallen leaves: he rakes them into a pile and disposes of them. Were it the case that the north wind would do this for us!

Assuming the validity of the easily refuted dichotomy between "intelligence" and "chance," Kreeft draws the following conclusion:

Therefore there must be a cause for human intelligence that transcends the universe: a mind behind the physical universe.

Let's arrange Kreeft's argument into a rough syllogistic outline so that we have a clear understanding of his premises and the logical consequence of his desired conclusion:

Premise 1: Man and the human brain must be products of design. (Kreeft holds that the principle of causality requires that "if there is intelligence in the effect (man), there must be intelligence in the cause.")

Premise 2: The universe has no intelligence and is capable only of "blind chance" without a designer.

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe could not have designed man and his brain, rather "there must be a cause for human intelligence that transcends the universe: a mind behind the physical universe."

Many would no doubt be persuaded by such an argument. But of course persuasion is distinct from rational proof, and many are philosophically predisposed to accepting an argument's conclusion because they agree with it or want it to be true, regardless of the truth value (or lack thereof) of the argument's premises. Indeed, the argument trades implicitly on the acceptance of the primacy of consciousness, specifically in the underlying assumption that existence finds its source in a form or act of consciousness. On a more immediate level, the argument arbitrarily denies the basic law of causality which, contrary to Kreeft's claim above, tells us that the actions of an entity depend on its nature. Since it is in the nature of biological organisms to act, change is an integral part of their nature, and change occurs not only in the course of an organism's existence (such as when it moves and acts), but also on the genetic level, as when it procreates by combining its DNA with another individual's of the same

species. Given this fact, the general truth of natural selection is self-validating, since it necessarily involves “a change in the gene pool of a population over time,” and this change in the gene pool is guaranteed by the very nature of biological reproduction.

Moreover, I do not think that rational scientists hold that the universe “designed” man, as if the universe were an intelligent entity. In this sense Kreeft seems to be battling a straw man here. If man and his brain evolved from more primitive precursors, and this evolution occurred in accordance to biological causality, not according to the invention of some inscrutable being allegedly existing beyond the universe. Indeed, if the universe is the sum totality of everything which exists, there is no “beyond the universe” to speak of.

It is also important to keep in mind that man’s physical composition is not alien to the universe in which he finds himself. His body is made up of elements which are found right here on earth. Why then should we suppose that the causation behind man’s evolution “transcends the universe”?

Kreeft then notes the following parenthetically:

(Most great scientists have believed in such a mind, by the way, even those who did not accept any revealed religion.)

This may be true, since most people in general have been raised in one religion or another, even if they later abandoned it. But this does not constitute an argument for any particular religious viewpoint, nor does it validate theism as such. The individuals which Kreeft has in mind most likely believed in a god before they made the choice to pursue an education and career in science in the first place. So they brought their god-belief with them into their chosen field of study, even if only latently. Science certainly will not lead a thinker to belief in a god. An individual may think that science led him to such belief if he converted to theism after becoming a scientist. But if he found his way to theism through arguments like Kreeft’s, then clearly science is not what took him there.

Kreeft then offers the following slanted concession:

How much does this argument prove? Not all that the Christian means by God, of course—no argument can do that. But it proves a pretty thick slice of God: some designing intelligence great enough to account for all the design in the universe and the human mind. If that’s not God, what is it? Steven Spielberg?”

Actually, I was thinking more along the lines of a [cartoonist](#). Kreeft himself would probably bristle at this, in spite of theism’s worldview implications. Incidentally, it is essentially the very shortcoming which Kreeft admits of his argument that encourages presuppositionalism’s disdain for “classical” apologetics. Contrary to what Kreeft states here, presuppositionalists hold that a transcendental argument, informed with biblical assumptions of course, can in fact prove the entirety of the Christian god. The fact that such an operation is viciously circular is both denied and embraced by champions of this school of apologetics.

One of the chief deficiencies with defenses of the design argument like the one which Kreeft offers, is not only their failure to validate the claim that design is evident throughout the universe, but also the failure to identify the alternative to design. If everything exhibits design, what would a lack of design look like? If mud splatter on the quarter panel of a Subaru Outback after an afternoon of off-roading exhibits “design,” then it would belong in the same category as the most majestic and advanced man-made structures, such as Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge, which would only serve in denigrating the achievement represented in the latter. Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge did not result from careening a vehicle through unfinished terrain. In spite of this, it seems that Kreeft’s conclusion would require that such mud splatter actually does exhibit design, yet he never produces a defense for such a position. On the other hand, if it is conceded that mud splatter does not exhibit design, then the premise that design is exhibited throughout the universe is undermined. This, in addition to the fact that Kreeft does not defend this premise (even though it is crucial to his desired conclusion), can only mean that Kreeft’s argument suffers from an internal fatal weakness.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: ["Chance"](#), ["Design"](#), [Theistic Arguments](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [12:30 AM](#)

11 Comments:

[NAL](#) said...

Based on the pitiful arguments from Peter Kreeft, I thought he was just some internet blogger. Imagine my surprise to learn that he has a PhD in philosophy and is a professor of philosophy at Boston College. He should be ashamed.

BTW, the old geocities site is gone. Here's the link to the square circles article:

<http://katholon.com/squarecircles.htm>

[November 21, 2009 1:39 PM](#)

[openlyatheist](#) said...

Excellent article. So many fallacies to the design argument, so little time.

Possible universes: Apologists exhibit a bizarre sense of probability. If there were a 1-in-a-trillion chance for this universe to exist, out of a continuum of other universes, all other universes in the set would be no more likely to exist. All possible universes would be equally improbable. So there would be nothing unusual about any particular universe coming about.

Furthermore, apologists don't apply this standard of probability to their God. If a God is omnipotent, surely it has a virtually unlimited number of possible avenues of action to take at any given moment. What would be the odds of God taking the singular action to produce this universe as opposed to the virtually infinite number of other actions he could take? Surely the odds of an omnipotent being taking any particular action whatsoever is far worse than 1-in-a-trillion.

The beach analogy: Apologists are dishonest in their analogies. They say, "If I find a watch in a field, I determine it was designed." They should really say, "If I find nothing in a field, I determine the field was designed." Apologists begin with Naturalism and co-opt man-made vs. natural design comparisons; such as placing a watch in a non-watch-making context. But in what context could one place the universe to make the analogy apt?

Fine-tuning vs. Omnipotence: Apologists proclaim that if the constants of the universe were different, life as we know it could not be. But this would not be the case if there were a God, for an omnipotent being doesn't have to play by the rules. An omnipotent God could create a universe with radically different physical constants and merely declare life to exist anyway, because he wishes it. Didn't God create angels before the universe? Are they not alive? What did God fine-tune to make sure that angels could live?

And if said God created a universe with radically different constants, it too would be a product of design, but without the very traits apologists use to detect design in this one. So how does an apologist tell the difference between a universe God designs to house life, and a universe God creates to be desolate? And how did the apologist gain access to a set of these other universes in order to make the comparison?

On an unrelated note, Dawson, I thought you might get a kick out of some poorly done [criticisms of Objectivism](#) I recently found.

[November 21, 2009 3:44 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hello Nal & OpenlyAtheist,

Thanks for your comments.

Regarding Kreeft: Yes, it is surprising how shoddy his defense of the design argument is, especially given his

celebrity status among Christian apologists. You may have thought he was just another internet apologist since so many internet apologists take him as their model. I wonder if Christians for whom Kreeft is a beloved champion ever notice that he offers no defense whatsoever on behalf of his own argument's second premise, while focusing primarily on the first, which is far less controversial, depending on what constitutes "design" (which he never defines). If I were a Christian apologist, I would be quite disappointed with Kreeft. But then again maybe not. If I were a Christian apologist, I probably would not know any better.

And yes, Nal, you're correct: Geocities closed all the free sites they were hosting, so I ponied up some hard-earned credit and bought a domain from Yahoo Small Business and moved all my stuff over to the new site. The main URL is: <http://www.katholon.com/>. The "www" seems to be optional; with or without it, you'll still get to my site. One good thing is that now I have virtually unlimited space, where before I had to create additional free accounts to hold my ever-bulging content. ;)

Openly, I love all the points you make, thanks for posting these well-thought-out remarks. In regard to the "possible universes" idea, you're right: any actually existing universe could, on the basis of the myriad alternatives open to the imagination, be said to be one in a trillion. It's like pulling four aces from the top of a shuffled deck of cards. What are the odds of that? Well, precisely the same as any other combination one might pick on any other occasion. Drawing all four aces is just as unique as drawing the king of hearts, the ten of spades, the seven of hearts and the three of clubs. But typically we don't ooh and ah this latter result, since we do not ascribe the same significance to it. But the uniqueness is statistically and probabilistically equivalent.

The rest of your points are also worthy of consideration.

As for the criticisms of Rand and Objectivism on the site you linked at, the naked bumbling on display there is too silly to take seriously (notice that no one interacts with anything Rand actually stated), but sadly it's quite typical. They are effectively broadcasting their own ignorance of the topic they're discussing. But hey, if they want to endorse altruism, go ahead. Just don't blame Objectivists when they take it to its logical conclusion.

Regards,
Dawson

[November 21, 2009 9:51 PM](#)

[NAL](#) said...

Kreeft:

f the temperature of the primal fireball that resulted from the Big Bang some fifteen to twenty billion years ago, which was the beginning of our universe, had been a trillionth of a degree colder or hotter, the carbon molecule that is the foundation of all organic life could never have developed.

- 1) The age of the universe is 13.73 billion years old.
- 2) There's a carbon atom, not a carbon molecule.
- 3) Carbon atoms were not developed in the big bang. They are formed via nucleosynthesis. Maybe he's claiming that a trillionth of a degree difference would have meant that stars wouldn't have formed and hence, carbon wouldn't have formed. Maybe he just doesn't know what he's talking about.

[November 22, 2009 7:04 AM](#)

[Dr Funkenstein](#) said...

Interesting article

Firstly, as NAL says, the fact that this guy is a professor of philosophy at a relatively good university is shocking - his ideas that you've presented here are literally a non-stop stream of assertions, straw-men, bogus probability arguments (if there's one thing apologists seem to really love doing, it's making faulty use of mathematical ideas) and so on.

Secondly, I'm surprised people still bother with the argument from design, it's one of the weakest theistic proofs going in my book.

It took a substantial knock from Hume a couple of hundred years back (many of the things you point out he mentions also, such as the fact ordered structures such as crystals and snowflakes can form via unthinking mechanical processes), then the development of Darwin's theory of natural selection acting on sources of variation provided a well-evidenced means by which order/complexity can arise in biology.

I think something else you also noted and that Kreeft concedes is that even if we were to accept the argument as sound, it tells us nothing about the 'designer' whatsoever - too many apologists pull this move with the various theistic arguments such as the AfD, cosmological argument, transcendental argument etc - ie they jump from the conclusion that 'therefore a god exists' to 'therefore God exists, created the world in 6 days, sent his son who was born of a virgin to die for us and left us with a 1200 page long infallible guide to life that everyone should take as absolute truth', which is obviously a complete non-sequitur.

Another thing in your article that caught my eye was Peter Pike's comparison of information and DNA. Unfortunately for Pike/Triablogue, it's fairly apparent that he/they know little if anything about information theory, since the article states:

"B) Information cannot arise from a random, non-directed process."

In actual fact in information theory maximal randomness produces the maximal amount of information. As computer scientist Mark Chu-Carroll states here

http://scienceblogs.com/goodmath/2008/08/why_is_randomness_informative.php

"Imagine you have a string of symbols. (In information theory, we describe everything as strings of symbols.) Now suppose you want to tell someone else how to write down the same string of symbols. The amount of information in the string is the length of the shortest description you can give them that allows them to write down the same string."

Chu-Carroll goes on to point out

"Informational complexity is well-defined by information, and it's got a precise meaning. The precise definitions vary between algorithmic information theory (Kolmogorov-Chaitin) and communication information theory (Shannon), but the basic concept underlying both is the same, and they agree that complexity is related to information content, and maximum information content (and thus maximum complexity) is perfect randomness.

There is no information theory that says randomness doesn't maximize information content and complexity. None! This is something that you see frequently from the clueless about information theory: they really don't like the idea that randomness contains maximum information, and they assert that not all information theory agrees with that - like the statement above "maximal randomness = maximal complexity is not true for all information theories"; but they never actually cite any kind of information theory at all - because there is none that does what they want. They're sure that there must be, because K/C and Shannon seem wrong. **But there is no such theory, no matter how much you may want one to exist.**"

(emphases mine)

Touchstone also has a couple of excellent critiques on DC showing why Pike is flat wrong in pretty much everything he says regarding information theory

<http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/08/peter-pike-and-calvinist-information.html>

[November 22, 2009 10:42 AM](#)

[Robert Morane](#) said...

Remove one of the characteristics necessary for God to exist--say, omnipotence--and God cannot exist. So it seems that the divine "universe" must have been designed, somehow, to allow for all of the divine characteristics to exist simultaneously. I guess that means the divine universe, and by extension, God, was fine-tuned... Of course, the Christian will undoubtedly go down the special pleading road and tell us that God's case is different... ;-)

I was wondering if anyone thought of applying this argument to God before?

[November 24, 2009 12:37 PM](#)

[Harold](#) said...

Great article.

As a side note, I was going to ask if you'd received any response from "Razorkiss" on your series of posts refuting his arguments.

Then I saw [this](#):

*"Dawson,
While you are quite impressively verbose - I think that the casual reader, upon examination of your mountains of verbiage inspired by this debate will be singularly unimpressed. In fact, it reminded me most strikingly of exactly what my position was. In any position not grounded in the Triune God of Scripture, logical thought just doesn't happen properly."*

Indeed.

[December 05, 2009 5:22 AM](#)

[Harold](#) said...

Eh, that's supposed to be "Razorskiss"

[December 05, 2009 6:00 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Thanks for pointing that out to me, Harold. I had not seen RK's comment until now. It took him 3 months to make any kind of reply.

It's always curious to me when apologists remark at the volume of a non-Christian's writings devoted to examining a defense of theism. Look how much in terms of volume Christians have devoted to their defenses! Think of how many very lengthy books have been published just on the resurrection of Jesus. Look at Bahnsen's 700+ page doorstop of a book on Van Til's presuppositionalism. I don't come close to holding a candle in the "impressively verbose" department.

RK says that "the casual reader... will be singularly unimpressed." Perhaps he's an authority on this. My targeted audience has never been the "casual reader." I don't think many "casual readers" would even begin to read anything by me - they're too absorbed with Steven King and TV Guide.

But to answer your question, Harold, so far I've seen zero interaction with my pieces from RK. If there's something wrong with my analysis of his case for Christian epistemology, I don't expect that we'll be learning what it is from him.

Regards,
Dawson

[December 05, 2009 9:58 PM](#)

[NAL](#) said...

While RK may think your posts are verbose, I find them detailed.

Also, I would like to see you add a [Continue Reading](#) feature to your posts. If it's not too much trouble.

[December 13, 2009 9:22 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Nal wrote:

"While RK may think your posts are verbose, I find them detailed."

I appreciate this. It's an important distinction, one which RK has missed. For that matter, it'd be nice to see a little more detail from the presup camp. But they're not very diligent when it comes to fleshing out the details. They make some very tall claims, but under examination there's very little substance, and what little substance is found turns out to be shaky obfuscation.

As for the Continued Reading function, I've always wondered how bloggers did that. Thanks! I might try it on my next (as [Chris Bolt](#) would call it) "lengthy, arrogant post."

Regards,
Dawson

[December 15, 2009 5:50 AM](#)