

Atheist Philosophical Arguments Against God's Existence –A Critique

Jeffrey Stueber

Atheists have no shortage of reasons for not believing in God. Atheists, for instance, believe God does not exist because there is evil in the world. They also believe that God is incapable of being known by some means. Neither one of these reasons are valid.^{1 2}

In 1997, former atheist Patrick Glynn had his book, *God: The Evidence*, published by Prima Publishing. Glynn uses cosmological design arguments and near-death experiences to argue for God's existence.

My analysis of atheist arguments explores Michael Martin's critique³ of Patrick Glynn's book. Before I jump into a critique of Martin, I will briefly explain why Glynn wrote his book.

Glynn, the associate director and scholar at George Washington University Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., was by the late 1970s a convinced atheist. This was partly due to the influence of academia. Glynn's professors didn't tell him God was dead, but the message he received from them was,

It was simply assumed that religious belief had become im-

1 **To be clear, no one can come to faith in the Triune God without the working of the Holy Spirit, as Martin Luther points out in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed.**

2 For additional information, the reader is directed to my book, *The Vast Wastelands of Unbelief*, a testimony to fallible atheist arguments.

3 Michael Martin, *Patrick Glynn's God: the Evidence*, The Secular Web - a drop of reason in a pool of confusion, Internet Infidels, http://infidels.org/library/modern/michael_martin/glynn.html. (accessed Aug 29, 2017). All quotations from Martin henceforth in this chapter will be from this essay unless otherwise noted.

possible for rational beings in the modern era, a fact that one accepted with a certain melancholy and nostalgia for previous ages when it was still possible for ‘men’ to believe.”⁴

However, beginning in the 1970s his beliefs were challenged. First, in 1973 Brandon Carter⁵ gave a presentation on the anthropic principle suggesting the universe was not a random accident but had physical constants that were finely tuned for life to exist on our planet. Two years later Raymond Moody⁶ published *Life After Death*, a book recounting people’s near-death experiences. This suggested to Glynn that there might be a realm beyond life on Earth where spiritual beings and God could reside. Later in the 1970s, other authors, like M. Scott Peck,⁷ argued faith and mental health could not be separated, and that one’s faith had a beneficial effect on one’s health. These authors laid the groundwork for Glynn’s doubt and his relationship with Gabriele, a spiritually strong woman who would become the love of his life, finally led him to change his mind.

If we apply Martin’s reasoning to a bicycle, we would say the individual parts of a bicycle were never purposed nor intended to end up making a working bicycle. Obviously, Martin’s argument does not work where design is present.

When theists⁸ use the anthropic principle to argue for God’s existence, they are saying that the universe appears to be made to support life and therefore, they conclude, that the universe must have been designed for that specific purpose.

4 Patrick Glynn, *God: the Evidence: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason in a Postsecular World* (Rocklin, CA: Prima, 1997), 4.

5 An Australian theoretical physicist who proposed the anthropic principle.

6 A philosopher, psychologist and physician

7 A psychiatrist and Methodist minister

8 By this I mean individuals who believe in a god but not necessarily the Triune God of the Bible.

Incredibly, Michael Martin claims that the anthropic principle can be restated to imply nothing more than functionality. Martin would suggest that the universe's designed nature is only apparent and not a result of some supernatural being's desires.

What sort of reasoning is this? If we apply Martin's reasoning to a bicycle, we would say the individual parts of a bicycle were never purposed nor intended to end up making a working bicycle. Obviously, Martin's argument does not work where design is present because bicycle parts are obviously designed. Taken to its logical conclusion, and using Martin's own illogic, we could also say that the words in Martin's critique are not purposely designed for the end result of his essay.

What Martin misses is that the reason many things have a specific function is because they are designed. The function of the parts that make up a bicycle is to ultimately provide a means of transportation for someone—they were designed that way. Without design, it would never provide that function. Martin's rebuttal only pushes the issue back a step. Why does the universe have the function it has? Most likely it is because it was specifically designed to have that function.

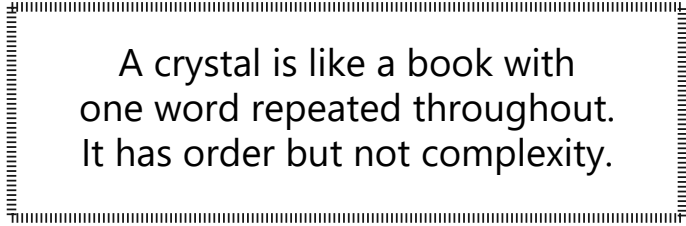
Referencing fellow atheist Victor Stenger, Martin suggests, in order to disprove that God had any hand in creation, that order can be produced from disorder. In a Huffington Post article, Stenger explains his claim that nature tends to go from disorder to order.

That's an easy one since you don't have to rely on complex biological arguments. You can go back to simple physics and look at something like water. Water appears in three phases: gas, liquid, and solid. If you are out in space or in a polar region, then the natural state of water is solid--ice. But that occurs only after water vapor, which is a gas, is condensed into liquid water, which is then frozen into ice. That original vapor has little structure and is about as simple as it could be. Then when it becomes a liquid, it develops some structure but can still flow and change shape. Finally, when it becomes solid

ice it has considerable structure--crystal layers and so forth. So, there is this tendency in nature, in physics, for physical substances to go from simplicity to complexity. That is actually the natural trend of physical processes.⁹

This is another example of an argument that has been answered years ago. Creationists like Charles Thaxton have described the difference between complexity and order. Crystals, for instance, are examples of periodic structures that have order but not complexity. A crystal, as far as information-possessing capability, is like a book with one word repeated throughout. By contrast, an aperiodic structure has complexity. DNA macromolecules have a low degree of order but a high degree of complexity.¹⁰

Ice is not complex, but DNA is complex. Ice is not complex, but the words that make up a book are complex. If Stenger's argument were true, we would have to believe that the words that make up Martin's critique of Glynn could come about by chance since water can form into ice. That, however, would be absurd.



A crystal is like a book with
one word repeated throughout.
It has order but not complexity.

Atheists try to refute divine design of the universe by suggesting there are an unlimited quantity of universes, and eventually one would be produced by chance that has the properties necessary for life to exist. Glynn correctly points out that the multiple universes in this theory are

⁹ Victor Stenger, *Questions on Science and Religion*, The Blog, Huffpost, June 11, 2012, updated Aug 11, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/victor-stenger/questions-on-science-and-b_1585151.html. (accessed Aug 29, 2017)

¹⁰ Charles Thaxton et. al., *The Mystery of Life's Origin* [Dallas: Lewis and Stanley, 1984] 129-130.

“speculative, undetected, and undetectable in principle.”¹¹ Martin, however, claims that God’s existence has the same problems. He has a point. Is God as undetectable as multiple universes?

Christian apologist William Lane Craig, in response to atheist Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, suggests the design hypothesis is simpler. According to the principle of Ockham’s Razor, we should not multiply explanations beyond what is necessary. If there were a simple mechanism for creating these universes then it would be preferable to the design hypothesis. Since there is no mechanism, the design hypothesis is preferred. There have been attempts to explain a mechanism for creating these many universes, but they require fine-tuning, and this once again requires a designer.¹²

While my review of Martin’s critique of Glynn does not represent all atheist objections to the design argument, it’s clear that the few presented here don’t come close to refuting the claim that God created the universe and life on this planet. It is also clear that the evidence reveals the God of the Bible as the only one true creator of everything.

Jeffrey Stueber, a free-lance writer, serves as secretary of the Lutheran Science Institute. He is a member of St. John Evangelical Lutheran in Watertown WI. His published works include:

- Evolution Is Faulty Moral Theory, chap. 14 in *Persuaded By The Evidence - True Stories of Faith, Science, & the Power of a Creator*, editors Doug Sharp and Jerry Bergman, [Green Forest: Master Books, 2008].
- *The Vast Wastelands Of Unbelief*, [Mustang: Tate Publishing, 2014]. See a review of this book at www.LutheranScience.org/books

¹¹ Glynn, 50.

¹² William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *God?: A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist* [New York: Oxford, 2004] 13-14.