

Richard Swinburne's Proof from Spatial Order for God's existence?1

Overall Swinburne claims that (Christian) theism is true as probable as not. He offers *particular* inductive arguments for the existence of God. Such particular arguments have all the same logical structure: Given that science cannot explain *x* and given the high initial plausibility of (Christian) theism, *x* is more probable than not only if we consider theism to explain *x*. Those arguments in turn are taken to argue that *x* is evidence that (the Christian) God exists. All the particular inductive arguments taken together form a *general* inductive argument for the existence of God. Swinburne claims: Given the initial probability of the truth of (Christian) theism and much empirical evidence (Christian) theism is true as probable as not, compared to alternative scientific and philosophical explanations.

Theism has a high initial probability of truth. This is mainly a function of two things: 1. The logical possibility of a God as claimed by theism. 2. The simplicity of theism because simplicity is the core criterium for the truth of a theory, claims Swinburne. Theism is simple because, for instance, only one entity is assumed, namely God, instead of say a multiplicity of universes. To name another aspect of theism's simplicity: Theism does not assume that everything comes out of nothing, which is a much more complex assumption than creation by a divine being, argues Swinburne.

In a nutshell, the probability of the truth of theism increases given a number of pieces of empirical evidence, including the spatial order of the physical universe. The central claim is: Our physical universe exists because it brings about a great good, namely humanly free agents, defined as "animate substances [...] with moral awareness and limited free will, power, and knowledge" (*The Existence of God*, p.118). In other words, our physical universe has a purpose – us.

Leading Question: *Why are there human bodies in the physical universe?* Note: The question is not: Why is there consciousness in the world. This question is relevant to the previous question but can be separated from it.

The Argument from Spatial Order (Teleological Argument):

Premise One: The body of a humanly free agent needs to be suited to exercise free will. This makes it necessary that the body has particular features.

This means: In order for the body to exercise free will the body needs to be suited for

- a. the acquisition of true beliefs about the environment.
 - b. the formation of purposes in the light of desires.
 - c. the expression of these purposes via chosen basic actions designed to affect the agent, others, and the world for good or ill.
- This means: The body is suited for the exercise of free will if the body's features include the following:

- i. sense organs.
- ii. information processor.
- iii. memory bank.
- iv. brain states that give rise to desires, good and evil.
- v. brain states caused by many different purposes that humans have.
- vi. a processor to turn these states into limb and other voluntary movements.
- vii. brain states that are not fully determined by other physical states.

Premise Two: Laws of nature of a particular kind (laws of physics: from initial singularity to chemical elements; laws of chemistry: from inorganic to organic matter & organism; biological laws: simpler organisms to more complex organisms) have led to the evolution of human bodies. The chemical and biological laws follow from the fundamental laws of physics.

Premise Three: Not all initial conditions of the physical universe or constants of nature would lead to the evolution of human bodies as we know them. The universe is tuned for human bodies.

Premise Four: Scientific evidence suggests that the universe is not only tuned for human bodies but even fine-tuned: The constants of the laws of nature and the variables of its initial conditions needed to lie within very narrow ranges if human bodies were (at all probably) to exist.

Premise Five: A fine-tuned universe like ours has a low a priori probability.

(1) In the absence of an explanation of the initial conditions of the universe and of values for the constants of nature, such fine tuning is very improbable if we did not know already about it via scientific inquiry. It is just one logical possibility among many others. The initial (a priori) probability that a Godless universe will be fine-tuned for human bodies is a function of all the possible theories and boundary conditions there could be for any universe at all. (2) No relatively *simple* universe would be fine-tuned because fine-tuning (as we know of it) requires a complex universe. If simplicity is our measure for initial probability then a universe like ours is initially rather improbable.

Premise Six: The assumption of a *multiverse* ["If one doesn't accept the 'providence' argument, there is another perspective, which [...] I find compellingly attractive. It is that our Big Bang may not have been the only one. Separate universes may have cooled down differently, ending up governed by different laws and defined by different numbers." (Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers*, 1999, p. 166)] to explain that the universe is of spatial order is *either mere unacceptable speculation* or invokes a set of universes which itself require an explanation in the same respect as ours. For, in the former case no scientific data support it and the degree of simplicity of such a theory is much lower than of theism. In the latter a causal connection between the universes is claimed.

Premise Seven: If God exists then he has good reasons to create embodied human beings whose embodiment requires a public space like our physical universe.

Given theism and without looking at the world, argues Swinburne, we can say the following about the likelihood of God creating humanly free agents:

1. God has the *power to create* humanly free agents.
2. God must bring about something because of God is an absolutely good being. An absolutely good being will inevitably try to make other good things.
3. It is not unlikely that God creates free agents with significant but limited free choice because:
4. a. the goodness of significant free choice is evident. (consider, for instance, the value we assign to living an autonomous life)
5. b. given possible negative consequences of choices (hurting others) it likely that God will create beings with limited free will agency.
6. c. the problem of possible bad choices and actions of humanly free agents requires us to be modest and just say that it is not unlikely that God creates humanly free agents. To create and not to create humanly free agents are "acts of equal best kinds."
7. Significant but limited free will (free will that makes a difference to the agent and others) requires a public place like the physical universe that allows to learn more about others, laws of nature, effects of actions, cooperate, etc.
8. The actual shape of the human body is a contingent matter in the sense that we can think of other ways of embodiments. So, all we can say without looking at the world is: "If God is to create creatures with limited free choice to make deeply significant differences to themselves, each other, and the physical world for good or ill, he must make them embodied. Humanly free agents need bodies, and thus to be placed in a physical universe that God has made." (*Existence of God*, 130)

Premise Eight: If God exists then he has good reasons to bring about a universe that undergoes a development to produce inanimate matter as science tells us our universe did, because of its *beauty*. (this premise could be dropped, premise 7 can suffice to reach the conclusion!)

Premise Nine: If God exists then he has good reasons to bring about a universe that undergoes a development to produce animate matter in the way science tells us our universe did, because of their *beauty* and also their ability to have *pleasant sensations* and *true beliefs* and *spontaneously to do good actions*. (this premise could be dropped, premise 7 can suffice to reach the conclusion!)

Conclusion One: It is *likely* that if there is God a fine-tuned universe like ours will exist.

Conclusion Two: It is *likely* that God exists.

End of Proof