

The Case Against Theism by Raphael Lataster

Most philosophers of religion like sitting on the fence, but not Raphael Lataster. The first half of the book is a demolition of William Lane Craig's arguments for theism, especially the much-hyped Kalam Cosmological Argument.

"Craig begins by noting that as "fine-tuning" is not synonymous with "design", and as the universe does allow "intelligent life", assuming fine-tuning should be uncontroversial. There is room for much controversy, however, as the focus is on fine-tuning for human life.... Given innumerable species, activities, and other objects that could be the focus, it would seem that perception is crucial in crafting the question. Such an inquisitive human may be as mistaken (or more so, given the scale) as a single audacious *Staphylococcus* bacterium residing on his skin, which supposes that the relatively enormous human being was designed just to be its home. If the mere occurrence of human life prompts the philosopher to claim that the universe is fine-tuned for human life, it is not clear why the same cannot be claimed for other foci. For example, as above, sexual abuse occurs frequently in the universe, so perhaps the universe can be described as being fine-tuned for sexual abuse. Had God not tweaked the constants in this way, sexual abuse simply would not be possible. Rhetorically then, the sceptic may ask: Why did a good god intentionally fine-tune the universe for sexual abuse? A convenient escape is to dismiss such horrendous acts as unpleasant side effects of some greater universal aim, though the same may be true of human life. Perhaps human life is just an unpleasant side effect of some god's desire to create a world with much sexual abuse. Furthermore, given Craig's reasoning, it can be claimed that the universe was finely-tuned for some existing thing or phenomena that is very

rare or even unique.”

The crux of Lataster’s counter-argument is that atheism is not the only alternative to theism in the Christian sense. It is possible to conceive of a non-personal Creator. He quotes Michael Levine’s view of a naturalistic pantheism. Levine “attempts to stress that this is not to say that there is no god, but that there is a god who is somehow divine, whilst being an impersonal and unconscious, all-inclusive unity.”

“Another pantheistic variant is pandeism, where a possibly personal or impersonal god became the universe. Such a concept could provide a compromise between pantheism and theism on the one hand, and naturalism and strong atheism on the other. There is no god. If god did exist at some point, he exists no longer, qua god. All that currently exists is the universe. There is also some element of deism here, hence the term ‘pandeism’, as god has seemingly vanished, post-creation.”

Lataster has certainly broken new ground in the philosophy of religion.

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