

◆ DOES GOD EXIST? ◆

Yes, for . . .

“NOTHING COMES FROM NOTHING”

Has the rain a father?
Or who has begotten the drops of dew?
From whose womb has come the ice?
And the frost of heaven, who has
given it birth? (Job 38:28, 29).

The clearest of all reasons for the existence of Deity is the fact that every effect must have a cause, which logically leads back to an uncaused Cause.¹

THE ARGUMENT STATED

The Greek philosopher Plato cited three reasons for belief in “the gods,” but the one listed “in the first place” was the very existence of “the earth and the sun and the stars and the universe.” “The gods,” said he, “produce the sun, moon, and stars.”² As Joseph Addison set Psalm 19 to music, he could hear all the celestial bodies “utter a glorious voice”:

Forever singing as they shine.
The hand that made us is divine.³

Of what is the moon made? U.S. Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin on July 2, 1969, collected 48.5 pounds of lunar materials composed of (1) fine-grained igneous rock, (2) medium-grained igneous rock, (3) breccia (angular rocks cemented together), and (4) fines (smaller materials). An analysis of these samples revealed the presence of sixteen earth elements, the principal ones being titanium, silicon, aluminum, iron, magnesium, calcium, sodium, and potassium. The moon is made of real matter, not

so different from our Earth. Reason says that matter without a cause did not just happen. Of nothing, nothing comes.

To reasonable people, the solidity of the lunar rocks on which the *Eagle* landed in the Sea of Tranquility

means reality, and reality demands a cause. If the moon consists of real matter, such as might be on a solid landing place and such as might be carried back to

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

earth, a maker of lunar matter must be assumed. The evidence obtained by the astronauts does not testify as to how or why the moon maker came into existence. Unless one assumes an infinity of makers, one must say that somewhere along the line there was a maker who was not made. Reason therefore calls for an unmade Maker.

If the Maker was unmade, He must have always been, which means He is eternal—and, if He did not receive His ability to be a Maker, He must be independent, self-contained. It appears, then, that the very existence of the moon certifies an independent, eternal Maker.

Many people have considered such objects as the moon as part of nature’s house. They

These lessons are selected and reprinted from the works and lectures of Dr. Hugo McCord, spanning a fifty-year period of his ministry.

reason that, as every house is built by someone, so He who built all things is God (see Hebrews 3:4). One does not have to see the Builder to know He has been there, for His workmanship has made His presence known. The creation of the world, nature's house, is understood by "what has been made," leaving unbelievers defenseless and without excuse (see Romans 1:19, 20).

Not only does the existence of the moon point to a necessary maker, but its movement in space indicates a necessary mover. Unless one argues for an infinite series of movers, then there was a mover which did not require help to start motion. The mover was self-contained in its power to move things. Further, unless it initiated out of nothing its power to start motion, then it is an eternal mover. Logic does not assert how many such self-contained eternal movers there are, but it does point to at least one. Moreover, the apparent unity of the universe indicates that there was *only* one. "The world refuses to be governed badly; 'ill is the rule of many; one ruler let there be'."⁴

THE ARGUMENT DENIED

No matter how convincing is the ancient maxim that "nothing comes from nothing"—which leads to the creation of earth and man—some learned men prefer to say that nothing created earth and man. Professor Fred Hoyle, a physicist and Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, frankly asserted that the origin of the universe's mother (hydrogen gas) was nothing, calling it eternal emergentism.⁵ Another learned philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), spoke of "blind Will" as perpetually creating the universe,⁶ and Henri Bergson (1859–1941) spoke of creative evolution by "unconscious Intelligence."⁷ The latter phrase is as contradictory as "conscious Mindlessness"; its use shows to what extent men will go when they refuse to have God in their minds.

Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–76) did his best to take the strength from the axiom "nothing comes from nothing." As an atheist, Hume was keenly aware of the force of the axiom; it goaded him, since it shows that the universe had a cause. Denouncing it as "that impious maxim of ancient philosophy," he affirmed that with such reason, "anything may appear able to produce anything"—anything "that the most

whimsical imagination can assign."⁸ However, at times Hume was more reasonable, saying, "Thus all the sciences almost lead us insensibly to acknowledge a first intelligent Author."⁹

Professor James Beattie, Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1770, wrote in refutation of Hume's reasoning: "We repeat, therefore, that this axiom [whatever begins to exist proceeds from some cause] is one of the principles of common sense, which every rational mind does and must acknowledge to be true; not because it can be proved, but because the law of nature determines us to believe it without proof, and to look upon its contrary as perfectly absurd, impossible, and inconceivable."¹⁰ Even after the strongest effort by a faultfinder, it is clear that, whether a house is a little manmade one or a gigantic house of nature, it had a builder.

David Hume is also famous for his distinction between what pure reason can do and what experience demonstrates. When one ball strikes a second ball, the second one moves. Hume affirmed that if Adam had never seen such a thing happen, he could not, by reason alone, affirm causality as the only explanation. Hume was determined to show a fallacy in the statement that whatever begins to exist proceeds from some cause.

Hume said, "The mind can always conceive any effect to follow from any cause, and indeed any event to follow upon another; whatever we conceive is possible, at least in a metaphysical sense."¹¹ He further said, "The separation, therefore, of the idea of a cause from that of a beginning of existence is plainly possible for the imagination."¹²

Theoretically, it is possible to imagine the second ball, at the moment of impact, moving on its own, without force being imparted from the first ball; but such imagination is not sensible. Likewise, theoretically, one can imagine that the universe is causeless, but the idea is senseless. Hume's technical argument is nonsense, and it only proves the strength of the causal argument for God's existence. His reasoning affords an example from real life of Paul's warning: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8a).

The same type of logic which would not allow a proof of God's existence because His nonexistence is conceivable would also forever forbid one's proving God's nonexistence, for His existence is conceivable! This reasoning, then, is an impasse. The only solution is to return to the law of cause and effect. This law is "the foundation of moral reasoning, which forms the greater part of human knowledge, and is the source of all human action and behaviour."¹³ Thus, after all that an intellectual, analytical, and biased mind could do, the causal argument for God's existence is unimpaired.

Plato wrote of the first mover. He listed nine kinds of contingent motion before he came to spontaneous motion, which he praised as being "ten thousand times superior to all the others" because—being "self-moving"—it must be "the origin of all motion."¹⁴

Though "thousands upon tens of thousands of bodies" might be set in motion afterward, Plato held the necessity of a "self-moving principle" as "the beginning of all" motion. He showed that an infinite regression of movers cannot logically be maintained. (That is, as one looks backward through a chain of movements, he eventually finds that something had to move first, without being moved by something else.) Aristotle repeated the same logic, showing that the first mover must be eternal. "If there is nothing eternal, then there can be no becoming; for there must be something which undergoes the process of becoming, that is, that from which things come to be; and the last member of this series must be ungenerated, for the series must start with something, since nothing can come from nothing."¹⁵

After Hume had written prolifically on his argument, of which he claimed to be the "inventor,"¹⁶ he later seemed to reverse his position. He wrote,

If we see a house, . . . we conclude, with the greatest certainty, that it had an architect or builder; . . . But surely you will not affirm, that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking, that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause, . . .¹⁷

However, he qualified his reversal by saying

that one cannot say that "such a Being exists necessarily." If one admits "the existence of a Being sufficient to serve as the cause of all possible effects," then that is all the argument from cause claims. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) agreed that the world arose "from an all-sufficient necessary cause," but he reneged at speaking "of an existence necessary by itself."¹⁸

If that "all-sufficient necessary cause" is not "an existence necessary by itself," then it appears it must be derived from some other existence that is "necessary by itself." Thus he was merely putting off the day when he must face up to an "existence necessary by itself." Finally, when he demoted that Being simply to a "regulative principle," one wonders how it could be equated with "an all-sufficient necessary cause."

Hume wrote, "We lie under an absolute necessity . . . of thinking, and believing, and reasoning with regard to all kind of subjects, and even of frequently assenting with confidence and security."¹⁹ Though Hume designated himself a "Sceptic," he said that being such was "the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian."²⁰ It is regrettable that so brilliant a mind wasted itself on disputes which were, he said, "at the bottom, verbal, and admit not of any precise determination."²¹ After much ado about relatively nothing, he returned finally to the statement that pure religion is "the chief, the only great comfort in life; and our principal support amidst all the attacks of adverse fortune. The most agreeable reflection, which it is possible for human imagination to suggest, is that of genuine Theism."²² If Hume was writing ironically, in keeping with his skepticism, he did not indicate it.

What can be imagined (as, something from nothing) is not sensible. Immanuel Kant followed Hume's reasoning as he forbade "talking of an *absolutely necessary* Being."²³

Kant could not live with the misleading idea in such an argument, and later—by "faith"²⁴—he referred to the "Original Being" as a "Him" who is all-knowing, just, all-mighty, all-good, eternal, and omnipresent.²⁵

Likewise, Hume apparently recanted from his cold, strict reasoning (irrefutable but impractical and misleading) and inferred, with no

sign of irony, “the natural attributes of the Deity”²⁶ and even spoke of “the divine object of our faith.”²⁷

Walter Kaufmann used the same strict reasoning previously employed by Hume and Kant, asserting that the adjective “necessary” cannot modify the noun “being,” since such would be an “illicit conjunction.” However, he failed to point out that Hume later cited such reasoning as “entirely verbal”²⁸ and that Kant went on to recognize God, which Kaufmann refused to do.²⁹

Kant also argued that the “principle of causality has no meaning . . . except in the world of sense,”³⁰ which is exactly where we are, and are invoking the principle of causality to account for the world of sense. “The whole conclusive strength of the so-called cosmological proof rests therefore in reality on the ontological proof from mere concepts,”³¹ he wrote, because one has to abandon experience to seek “among the pure concepts” which “contain the conditions of the possibility of an absolutely necessary Being.”

Then, after Kant had attempted methodically to display “a whole nest” of assumptions “hidden in that cosmological proof,” it appears that he changed his mind. He said, “It may be allowable to *admit* the existence of a Being entirely sufficient to serve as the cause of all possible effects.”³²

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is that the existence of the moon points to a Maker, and the movement of the moon points to a Mover. Logic says that this Maker/Mover must be independent and eternal.

¹Normally, this reasoning is called “the cosmological argument,” but its content demands that it be called “the argument from cause.” The meaning of the word “cosmological,” pertaining to order, does not fit the argument from cause. The word “cosmological” is derived from *cosmeo*, meaning “to arrange, to set in order.” A valid argument for God’s existence is found in the orderly arrangement of the universe, but it is not the argument of causality.

²Plato, *The Works of Plato*, Book X, *Laws*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Dial Press, n.d.), 453.

³Joseph Addison, “The Spacious Firmament on High,” *Songs of Faith and Praise*, comp. and ed. Alton H. Howard (West Monroe, La.: Howard Publishing Co., 1994).

⁴G. R. G. Mure, ed., *Aristotle* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1964), 173.

⁵James Oliver Buswell Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 1:82.

⁶*Ibid.*, 1:84.

⁷*Ibid.*, 1:85.

⁸David Hume, “An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,” in *Hume Selections*, ed. Charles W. Hendel Jr. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), 191, 192n.

⁹Hume, “The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,” in *Selections*, 385.

¹⁰James Beattie, *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth: in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism* (Edinburgh, Scotland: A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1770), 111.

¹¹David Hume, “An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature,” in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Charles W. Hendel Jr. (Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press Division of the Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1955), 188.

¹²Hume, “The Treatise of Human Nature,” in *Selections*, 29.

¹³Hume, “Enquiry,” 192.

¹⁴Plato, *Plato Selections*, ed. Raphael Demos (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927), 429–30.

¹⁵Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, quoted in John Hick, ed., *Classical and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 467.

¹⁶Hume, “Abstract,” 198.

¹⁷Hume, “Dialogues,” 304.

¹⁸Immanuel Kant, *Kant Selections*, ed. Theodore Meyer Greene (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), 258.

¹⁹Hume, “Dialogues,” 390n.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 401.

²¹*Ibid.*, 390n.

²²*Ibid.*, 397.

²³Immanuel Kant, “Critique of Pure Reason,” in *Kant Selections*, ed. Theodore Meyer Greene (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), 244. (Emphasis his.)

²⁴Immanuel Kant, “Critique of Judgement,” in *Kant Selections*, ed. Theodore Meyer Greene (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), 525.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 509.

²⁶Hume, “Dialogues,” 390.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 401.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 390n.

²⁹Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958), 111.

³⁰Kant, “Critique of Pure Reason,” 255.

³¹*Ibid.*, 254. See the discussion of the cosmological argument in note 1 on this page. The ontological argument pertains to the question of existence. According to the thinking of Anselm of Canterbury, it is impossible to be aware of a Being who does not exist; therefore, God exists.

³²*Ibid.*, 255. (Emphasis his.)

A Note From the Editor

The lessons which comprise this issue of *Truth for Today* present a study of the True and Living God. The studies were selected from the available writings of one of our finest scholars, Hugo McCord. We have chosen key lectures he has given, covering the major questions that are asked about God. We appreciate brother McCord’s generosity in allowing us to use this material.