



The Fine-Tuning Argument

The core notion: The universe is fine-tuned for life.

- If the initial “bang” had differed in strength by as little as $1/10^{60}$, the universe would have either collapsed back on itself or expanded too rapidly for stars to form.
- If the force that holds neutrons and protons together had been stronger or weaker by as little as 5%, life would be impossible.

The Fine-Tuning Argument

- If gravity were stronger or weaker by as little as $1/10^{40}$, life sustaining stars such as the sun could not exist.
- If the neutron were not about 1.001 times the mass of the proton, either all protons would have decayed into neutrons or all neutrons would have decayed into protons.

The Fine-Tuning Argument

Atheistic Hypotheses

The Atheistic Single-Universes Hypothesis: There is only one universe and it is ultimately an inexplicable, brute fact that the universe exists and is fine-tuned.

The Atheistic Many-Universes Hypothesis: There exist very many—perhaps infinitely many—universes, each of which has a randomly determined set of initial conditions and values for the parameters of physics.

The Fine-Tuning Argument

Prime Principle of Confirmation

When considering two competing hypotheses, an observation counts as evidence in favor of the hypothesis under which the observation has the highest probability (or is the least improbable).

The Fine-Tuning Argument

The basic argument:

Premise 1: The existence of the fine-tuning is not improbable under theism.

Premise 2: The existence of the fine-tuning is very improbable under the atheistic single-universe hypothesis.

Thus, the fine-tuning data provide strong evidence to favor the theistic hypothesis over the atheistic single-universe hypothesis.

What about the atheistic many-universes hypothesis?

Wouldn't the universe-generator have to operate in accordance with a complex system of natural laws? So, if *those* laws had been slightly different, there would have been no such generator. But, in that case, we must account for design at this level.

What about the atheistic many-universes hypothesis?

There are other features of the universe which appear to be designed. So, for instance, Albert Einstein and other physicists have noted that the basic laws of physics seem to exhibit an extraordinary degree of beauty, elegance, and harmony. Would we expect this under the atheistic many-universes hypothesis? Under theism?

What about the atheistic many-universes hypothesis?

According to the second law of thermodynamics, things naturally tend to go from order to disorder. But, in this case, the initial state of our universe must have been extraordinarily ordered. Can the many-universes theory account for this? (Think Scrabble.)

Conclusion

The fine-tuning of the universe counts as powerful evidence for the existence of God.

Pascal's Wager

In cases where the evidence clearly favors one side or the other, go with the evidence.

Pascal's wager shows that, in cases where the probability of Christianity's being true is at least close to 50%, the rational thing to do is to "bet on God."

Pascal's Wager

- Life is a risk.
- It's rational to minimize risk as much as possible.
- $\text{Value} = [(\text{Payoff} \times \text{Probability}) - \text{Cost}]$
- The rational gambler always take the bet with the highest value.

Pascal's Wager

Assuming that each of the following costs \$30, which is a better bet?

- Trigger pays \$900 and has a 1/3 chance of winning.
- Mr. Ed pays \$300 and has a 2/3 chance of winning.

Pascal's Wager

Assuming that the probability of each is about 50%, which of the following is a better bet?

- 'Against God' pays a significant but finite payoff and costs nothing.
- 'For God' pays an infinite payoff and costs a large but finite amount.

Pascal's Wager

But what does it mean to "bet on God"?

Put roughly, it means to live a life which is likely to lead to belief.

The Bible

Why accept the Bible to be divinely revealed?

Two Initial Tests

- The test of content: Does the alleged revelation contain what we'd expect a genuine revelation to contain?
- The test of miracle: Does the alleged revelation tell us what only God could have known at the time of its writing?

The Bible

Now, as far as I can see, the Bible fares quite well on these two tests.

“Who do you say I am?”

Legend?
Liar?
Lunatic?
Lord?

The Resurrection

- The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation upon which Christianity rests.
- On Easter morning, the tomb was empty.
- Subsequently, Jesus' disciples—timid and weak prior to that Easter morning—turned the ancient world upside down.

The Resurrection

- The early church came into direct conflict with both Jewish and Roman authorities.

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

- The Jesus Seminar: Group of academicians committed (in the tradition of Thomas Jefferson) to a naturalistic (or *anti-supernaturalistic*) reading of the New Testament.
- JS has “color coded” the words of Jesus in the gospels to indicate what He actually said (and didn’t say).

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

In keeping with its agenda, JS offers naturalistic explanations of the resurrection accounts.

- “Spiritualized Resurrection” Theory
- Stolen Body Theory
- Swoon Theory
- Wrong Tomb Theory

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

Wrong Tomb Theory

On Sunday morning, the women went to the wrong tomb.

Problem: Did the disciples go to the wrong tomb? Did the Roman guard and the Jewish authorities also go to the wrong tomb?

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

Swoon Theory

After being beaten nearly to death, crucified and pronounced dead by His Roman executioners, the cold, damp tomb resuscitated Jesus.

Problem: Did the cold, damp tomb also remove the grave clothes, roll away the stone, and incapacitate the Roman guard?

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

Stolen Body Theory¹

The disciples stole the body.

Problem: This seems inconsistent with what we know about the disciples psychology both prior to and after Easter morning.

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

Stolen Body Theory²

Jewish authorities stole the body.

Problem: Why didn't they produce the body when the fledgling Christian church began its phenomenal growth in Jerusalem?

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

“Spiritual” Resurrection Theory

New Testament references to Jesus rising from the dead don't refer to a literal, bodily resurrection but rather to His continued existence "in the hearts of His followers."

Problem: This is *not* how the early church understood the resurrection narratives.

See 1 Corinthians 15.

The Jesus Seminar & the Resurrection

Naturalistic commitments involve a rejection of miracles.

What are miracles?

- Violations of laws of nature

What are laws of nature?

- Prescriptive vs. descriptive

Laws of nature are simply **descriptions** of how things ordinarily go.

Engaging Postmoderns

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

— John 13:34-35

The Question

What does it mean to contend for the *truth* of the faith in a culture that doesn't value truth?

Postmodern values

TRUTH

truth

GOODNESS

goodness

BEAUTY

beauty

Postmodern values

First, while postmoderns don't accept the objectivity of beauty and goodness, they nonetheless have aesthetic and moral sensibilities.

"What is decisive against Christianity is **taste**, no longer reason." — Nietzsche

Postmodern values

So we can appeal to postmoderns aesthetic and moral sensibilities—that is, to their **tastes**—by highlighting the faith's **beauty and goodness**.

Postmodern values

Second, postmoderns do typically value **community**.

But, of course, the most authentic community is the **church**.

Postmodern values

So we can appeal to postmodern desires for such community by highlighting the life of Christ's people as the one and only truly **live-giving** community.