

critical markers. One in theodicy, offered almost as an afterthought, comes when Ellis talks about the motivation of those who create computer viruses. If human beings can thus enjoy creating disorder for its own sake, why not a higher consciousness?

Frank Parkinson

DOES GOD EXIST? The Craig-Flew Debate

Stan W. Wallace (ed.)

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According to the philosopher of religion William Rowe, the question of God's existence relates to "one of the most basic questions to have emerged in the history of human thought: are we the product of blind chance or is there a divine being who has created us for some purpose?" (p.73) Yet, despite the title, this book is not about the question whether or not God exists, but about the question whether there are good reasons to believe that God exists or good reasons to believe that God does not exist. Central to the book is the transcript of a discussion between the theologian William Lane Craig and the atheistic philosopher Antony Flew (17-47), which took place at the University of Wisconsin on 18 February 1998, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the famous debate between Frederic Copleston and Bertrand Russell, held in 1948 on BBC Radio.

Starting the debate, Craig presents five reasons for thinking that theism is more plausible than atheism. These reasons are:

1. The physical universe had a beginning. Since whatever begins to exist has a cause, therefore the universe has a cause. Basically, Craig presents a cosmological argument using insights from modern cosmology.
2. The appearance of life and consciousness in the world was incredibly unlikely, considering the

fine-tuning of the initial conditions of the universe. We have, therefore, good reasons to assume that this fine-tuning is not due to law or chance, but to design. Craig here presents an argument from design, and refers to William Dembski's idea of 'specified complexity' to make his point.

3. Then there is a moral argument. According to Craig, there is an objective distinction between right and wrong. Since there are objective moral values, God must exist.
4. Craig also presents an argument from miracles: The historical facts concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are reliable, and the origin of the Church requires explanation.
5. Finally, there is an argument from religious experience: There are theistic religious experiences from which it follows that God must exist.

According to Craig, these are positive reasons that taken together yield a cumulative case for the credibility and rationality of theism. Now, one would expect Flew to present some positive reasons to establish that atheism is the most rational position. Unfortunately, Flew does no such thing, but merely attempts to show that Craig's five reasons are insufficient to establish the credibility and rationality of theism. In itself, this is a good strategic move. Yet, because of it, Flew does not succeed in making it clear why one should prefer an atheistic view over against a theistic view. At most he has established that Craig's arguments were unsuccessful, but from this alone one cannot conclude that therefore it is unreasonable to believe in the existence of God.

The discussion is preceded by an introduction by philosopher of religion Keith Yandell, who moderated the Craig-Flew debate. Yandell's introduction is useful. He describes how Flew's atheism and his criticism of Craig's arguments are based on elements of Humean thought. He also lays out a map of the different issues that are raised in the papers following the discussion. In those papers, eight theistic and atheistic philosophers

respond to the Craig-Flew discussion, sometimes focusing on the debate as a whole, sometimes on one or more specific issues raised during the discussion. These responses are surprisingly clear in describing the issues at stake. However, what also struck me was that with regard to the question whether we have good reasons to believe that God exists, the answer one gives or is willing to accept apparently depends on one's presuppositions. The atheistic responses all favour Flew's position, while the theistic philosophers all argue that Craig has the stronger arguments. Apparently, to establish the rationality of (a)theism, arguments alone are not sufficient. Both Craig and Flew are given the opportunity to respond elaborately to all the papers.

For someone well trained in the philosophy of religion, this book does not cover new ground. For those less familiar with the field it is an excellent introduction, not least because the elaborate endnotes and bibliography could

function as a source for further study. Also, it could be used in philosophy of religion courses to analyze the different arguments and the assumptions underlying them. The science-and-religion content of the book is minor, but discussions surrounding Big Bang cosmology and Intelligent Design are often present in the background. Interestingly, only one of the philosophers raises the methodological issue whether or not one can use scientific theories, as Craig does, to establish theological claims. Interestingly, the exception is Flew, who argues that scientific knowledge is knowledge of the physical universe, and cannot be used to argue for anything beyond it. Ironically, by arguing so, this eminent atheistic philosopher seems to me to have more feeling for what religion and its problems entail than do the theistic philosophers. A book that makes one think.

Taede A. Smedes

ESSSAT is a scholarly organisation, based in Europe, which aims to promote the study of the relationships between the natural sciences and theological views.

President:

Prof Dr Willem B Drees,
Dept of Theology, Leiden University,
P.O. Box 9515,
2300 RA LEIDEN,
The Netherlands.

Tel: +31 71 5272 580

<w.b.drees@let.leidenuniv.nl>

Secretary:

Revd Dr Eva-Lotta Grantén,
Assessorsvagen 21,
23731 BJARRÉD,
Sweden.

Tel: +46 46 294 389

<eva-lotta.granten@teol.lu.se>

Bank Account:

654 460 Postbank Dortmund,
Germany.

Bankleitzel (sort code) 440 100 46

Website: www.ESSSAT.org
ISSN 138 5473

Membership Secretary & Treasurer:

Mr Chris Wiltsher,
33 Briardene,
DURHAM DH1 4QU,
UK.

Tel: +191 383 1116

Fax/answerphone: +191 386 6315

<esssat@gsmentors.co.uk>

Editor of ESSSAT News:

Prof. Neil Spurway,
76, Fergus Drive,
GLASGOW G20 6AP,
UK.

Tel: +44 (0) 141 946 3336

<N.Spurway@bio.gla.ac.uk>