

**REVIEW: Atheist Universe: The Thinking Person's Answer to Christian Fundamentalism by David Mills**

I like this book for its about the questions that people have about atheism and does a nice job of dislodging dangerous fundamentalist assumptions. The trouble is Jesus said God must be all in all meaning you cannot leave religion at the door when you enter the government chambers. The Christian who is not fundamentalist is dishonest. They are dishonest first and Christian second if Christian at all!

Here the interviewer brings up something that puts many atheists in the Church in denial that they are in fact atheist! It relates to God as judge and enforcer of justice.

INTERVIEWER: But don't you think there has to be some kind of ultimate justice for human beings? People who do wrong are not always punished in this world, and good is not always rewarded. Don't these injustices require an afterlife to redress the imbalance: where good is ultimately rewarded and evil punished?

MILLS: You're undeniably correct that there is often grave injustice in this world. But that sad fact argues against, rather than for, God's existence. There is no reason to believe that the injustice we perceive in daily life is not typical of how the universe as a whole operates. For example, suppose that a deliveryman places a large crate of oranges on your doorstep. You open the crate and discover that every single orange you see on top of the box is rotten. Would you then conclude that the remaining oranges on the bottom of the crate must be good? No. You would conclude that the rotten oranges you see on top are probably quite representative of the shipment as a whole. Likewise, the injustice we perceive in our world is evidence that we unfortunately live in an unjust world rather than that justice is waiting "just beyond sight."

...deterrence, separation and rehabilitation are reasons for punishment because (and only because) they produce beneficial results. Thus, the punishment of an individual—or the promulgation of the possibility thereof (i.e., deterrence)—that produces a better social environment than the absence of punishment would produce has a reason for implementation.

We must now differentiate punishment implemented for good cause from punishment enacted solely for vengeance or sadistic pleasure.

MY COMMENT: Religion will say you are assuming God if you talk about how the universe should be fair and not. It will ask how you can even believe justice matters or is real if there is no God of justice. My answer is that even if that is true, the fact remains that belief in God does not solve the problem. It is ME who decides what justice means and if God is just. I project my justice values onto God. It is better just to talk about justice or to say that it is useful and indispensable in some no matter what it means exactly. There is nothing you can do about that so you can call yourself fair. To say it comes from God when it does not even if you believe in God is itself unjust.

Another point is in how with religion, the bad side and the bad people stand out most and influence us the most which is why every religion is largely helpless in getting obedience. We all agree with those being like the rotten oranges we find when we look in the top of the crate. We write off the rest of the oranges as bad. We look for a better crate of oranges.

He is right that punishing as in correcting the imbalance of justice by making the person pay is nasty and evil. Punishing as in making the person make amends is the only rightful and lawful form of punishment. God as Jesus said is about vengeance.

MILLS, What about Mortimer Adler's question: "Why is there something, rather than nothing?"

I hesitate to criticize Adler because I admire his writings and respect his outstanding contributions to education and to contemporary philosophy. So, in Adler's defense, let me point out that he has always claimed to speak as a philosopher, never as a scientist. Adler's question, however—"Why is there something, rather than nothing?"—

assumes that there is supposed to be nothing: that the “natural” state of the universe is nonexistence. The fact that there obviously is something, then, is viewed by Adler as a miracle requiring a supernatural explanation. The perceived “mystery” of Adler’s question lies, not in a supernatural answer, but in his presumptive formulation of the question itself. Adler’s question is similar to presuming that grass is supposed to be red, then claiming that its undeniably green color is evidence that a Divine miracle has occurred. From a scientific perspective, though, the question is: Why shouldn’t there be something rather than nothing? What law of science claims that the universe is not supposed to exist, or that nonexistence is the “natural” condition of the universe?

**MILLS ON CREATION:** the universe—which is the sum of all mass-energy—could not, according to the mass-energy conservation law, come into existence *ex nihilo* in the way demanded by creationism. According to this well-confirmed scientific principle, our universe of mass-energy was never created, and cannot be annihilated. To believe in “scientific” creationism, therefore, is to overlook or dismiss the law of the conservation of mass-energy.

[William Lane] Craig - “the universe can’t have an infinite number of events in its past; it must have had a beginning.” Craig is correct that if you mix finite and infinite numbers in a mathematical equation, you will indeed get contradictory and nonsensical results. But this fact is entirely definitional—i.e., it mathematically relates only to itself, rather than to the empirical universe. It’s like saying “two plus two equals four; therefore, the cosmos sprang into being from nothing, proving a Creator’s involvement.”

Craig’s conclusion is a non sequitur (it doesn’t follow). He is offering valid observations only about his self-created, self-contained universe of abstract numbers, rather than about the true, outside universe in which we actually live.

As an admirably devoted Christian, Craig no doubt believes in the power of Biblical parables. But he has completely failed to demonstrate—or even attempted to demonstrate—the real-world applicability of his arithmetic parable through the scientific method. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Craig’s arithmetic parable is wholly irrelevant to the law of the conservation of mass-energy. Consequently, it is unimportant whether Craig has lost three, half or all of his marbles. The mass-energy conservation law nonetheless forbids *Creation ex nihilo*. Craig similarly argues that the universe can’t be infinitely old because an infinite length of time would have to precede the Big Bang—an infinite length of time which, by definition, could never have ended to permit the Big Bang to occur. In other words, in an infinitely old universe, we could never actually arrive at any specific moment in time. Craig repeatedly misuses his mathematical infinities to “prove” a conclusion that is mathematically cohesive but empirically ridiculous.

Let me demonstrate why: Suppose that you wish to walk a distance of one city block. Needless to say, before you can reach your final destination one block away, you must first traverse half of that distance (or half a block). Likewise, before you can reach your midpoint half a block away, you must first arrive at a point which is half of that distance (or a quarter of a block from your starting position). Before you can walk a quarter of a block, you must walk an eighth of a block, etc. All of these facts are incontrovertibly true and can certainly be extended to infinity (e.g., before you can walk 1/5000 of a block, you must walk 1/10000 of a block, *ad infinitum*).

Applying Craig’s theory about infinities to the real world, you could never arrive at your final destination one block away. Why not? Because you would first need to arrive at an infinite number of intermediate waypoints—an infinity of waypoints that, by definition, is without end and therefore impassable. How could you possibly travel “beyond” an infinite number of anything? Back to reality: It goes without saying that, despite the mathematical “impossibility” of your reaching an infinite number of waypoints, you can easily walk the length of a city block within two or three minutes at most. This example illustrates the clear distinction between ID’s philosophical “proofs” of God’s existence and the true world of experimental physics. All cosmologies—whether secular or theological—are forced to contemplate an infinite regress, either in the form of mass-energy or in the form of a god. So the question again reverts to whether: (A) this infinite regress harmonizes with the mass-energy conservation laws (as I have been suggesting), or (B) whether a god violated the mass-energy conservation laws through an *ex nihilo* Creation event. Craig is back where he started, having made no forward progress whatever in his God-Did-It argument.

**MY COMMENT:** What if something like a creator but not like a personal God made a functional God from nothing who then made all things from nothing? Creation or its denial land us in the thought that an infinite series of causes explains the origin of all. Creation only looks more simple than the notion that there was no beginning

and no first cause but only a countless succession of causes that had no ultimate beginning. The Big Bang, by the way, is not the first cause for it came from something which came from something else and so on. Its not the creation.

The supernatural explanation thing assumes that its a straightforward supernatural. What if it is not? What if it is so cloaked in its lies and disguises that its valueless as an explanation? John took the car if John never lies. But if John lies you never know who took the car even if he said he did. If something is hiding what it is then you cannot really know if it is really supernatural. Supernatural explanations are always based on pretending you know more than you do.

MILLS: The question of whether Einstein believed in God depends on your definition of “God.” If you define “God”—as the creationists do—as a supernatural Being Who created the universe, Who hears your prayers and Who decides whether you go to Heaven or Hell, then the answer is no. By the traditional definition of God, Einstein was an atheist. Einstein himself said, “It was, of course, a lie what you read about my religious convictions, a lie which is being systematically repeated. I do not believe in a personal God and I have never denied this but have expressed it clearly. If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it.”

Regarding life-after-death, Einstein said, “I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own—a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotism.”

Einstein’s statement that “God does not play dice with the universe” was a reference to the philosophy of pantheism. Rather than proposing a miracle-working, personal Deity, pantheism accepts the supremacy of the laws of physics. Thus interpreted, Einstein’s statement would read “The laws of physics do not permit Nature to behave randomly or chaotically.” As we noted, however, even this “translated,” non-mystical expression of Einstein’s statement turns out to be false, as Niels Bohr and Max Born demonstrated.

MILLS ON HOW RELIGION PERSISTS EVEN AFTER NATURE IS SHOWN TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE GODS DO, EVOLUTION IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO A DESIGNING GOD: After conceding that physical laws sufficiently explain Nature’s behavior, we may wonder why the citizens continue to insist so dogmatically that the Greek gods exist at all. What evidence is left to substantiate the gods’ existence? None. We may wonder whether psychological or emotional attachment to the gods may be clouding the citizens’ scientific judgment. Likewise, modern creationism, in the end, has little to do with science, and everything to do with human psychology and emotion.

Creationist argument: Even if one believes that all life evolved from a single cell or cells, a Creator is still necessary to explain the origin and complexity of cellular life.

Answer: Earlier, we discussed how creationists point to highly evolved organs, such as the human eye, and claim that the organ’s complexity reveals supernatural design. The fallacy of this argument is to assume that “blind chance” or “random accident” guides evolutionary progress. Moreover, the argument falsely demands a lottery-like instant winner, rather than a gradual accumulation of adaptations through natural selection.

MILLS ON THE LOW NUMBER OF SCIENTIFIC BELIEVERS IN DESIGN:

The percentage of scientists endorsing ID theory is trifling

A study published in Nature (July 23, 1998) revealed that, of the membership of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, only 7 percent of its leading scientists believed in a personal God, much less in the “evidence” of the ID crusade. ID’s greatest triumph therefore has been in convincing the general public that there is a controversy raging among scientists over Intelligent Design. There is no scientific controversy whatever.

MILLS ON FOSSILS: The Theory of Evolution does not predict the fossilization of any species. Fossilization occurs for wholly independent reasons of geochemistry—not because of evolutionary theory. So fossil gaps in no

way contradict evolutionary science. The geologic column is a fortunate coincidence of Nature that attests biological evolution.

MILLS ON MIRACLES, A true miracle is, by definition, impossible through natural means—or at least highly improbable. The chances are always greater therefore that the report of the miracle is mistaken in its account of what actually occurred or why it occurred.

COMMENT: If God should not do a miracle to save a sick and dying baby then the baby recovering is a miracle. A miracle is roughly what should not happen but does. A healing would be a miracle but a non-healing is also one.

Nobody denies that a miracle is not just a miracle. What if its 2 per cent miracle and 98 per cent natural or whatever? Take the resurrection of Jesus. What if Jesus awakened in tomb so sick he was about to die again? What if God knew of a medicine to accelerate recovery and gave it to him? As amazing as this sounds none of it needs much miracle-working and you don't really know what the actual miracle is. What if the miracle was that Jesus was in a coma and the resurrection was not a real miracle but a lookalike one? Jesus may have wrongly believed he rose.

A miracle if it raised a man from the dead would be doing a very improbable thing. It is more probable that the miracle is simulating it. Even if a miracle would not break the rule that dead men stay dead the fact remains that we are only guessing that it is not breaking it. We need to be honest. Exception proves the rule is often misapplied to things that actually break the rule. If a miracle was not breaking the rule that the dead stay dead then to sustain that then assume it is simulating. That protects nature and science. If there is a choice between a miracle that tells you your science is wrong that the seed will need more than a few seconds to turn into a plant and a miracle that fakes the growth the latter is the one that fits nature the best. Nature matters more than miracle for a miracle needs nature to be real so it can change it and be seen as that which nature cannot do.

MILLS CONCLUSIONS, RELIGION AND SCIENCE ARE IN CONTRADICTION:

In closing, let me outline a few general observations about the philosophical differences separating religion from science:

1. Any religion worthy of the name must, by definition, include some form of belief in the supernatural (e.g., gods, devils, holy ghosts, angels, heaven, hell). Science, however, addresses only naturally occurring phenomena and thus, by definition, excludes consideration of the supernatural.
2. Religion derives its belief system from “Divine Revelation” and from “inner conviction.” Science, by contrast, derives its laws from real-world experimentation and through mathematical and logical reasoning.
3. The religious adherent believes that “all things are possible to them that love God.” If asked whether Jesus could throw a rock faster than the speed of light, the religious believer would unhesitatingly say yes. Science, however, establishes laws restricting Nature’s behavior. Science says, for example, that Jesus could not throw a rock faster than light.
4. Because religious doctrines are supposedly ordained of God, the religious adherent cannot easily question the teachings of his chosen church, even when those teachings are provably false. The scientist, on the other hand, is most rewarded when he proves the conventional wisdom wrong and revolutionizes our understanding of the universe.
5. The religious individual strives to behave “morally” in order to please God and to gain heavenly reward. The science-minded individual derives his ethical system from the real-world consequences of his actions upon others and upon himself.
6. The religious individual tends to hold his beliefs rigidly, fanatically and with a closed mind—never seriously questioning the accuracy of his Church’s teachings. The scientist, however, is eagerly and open-mindedly searching for new theories and for evidence to topple old theories.

