

“You Can’t Prove God’s Existence!” ...is nothing but a trivial evasive slogan

The above title (enclosed in quotes) has become such an efficient conversation-stopper whenever the question of God’s existence is brought up that serious debate on this matter rarely even begins! Clearly, the reigning assumption in contemporary academia (behind which our culture naively follows) is that the role of so-called “God-language” is limited to matters of morality and subjective experiences. What results from that assumption is that biblical faith **cannot**, even in principle, gain traction to ground its legitimacy on a *factual* basis. The late paleontologist Dr. Stephen Jay Gould for example claimed he was doing religion a favor by arguing that science and religion are equally deserving of respect, only to then proceed to strip religion of all *factual* authority. He clarified his thesis by defining “NOMA” as follows:

*“NOMA is a simple, humane, rational, and altogether conventional argument for mutual respect, based on non-overlapping subject matter, between two components of wisdom in a full human life: our drive to understand **the factual character of nature** (the magisterium of **science**), and [on the other hand] our need to define **meaning** in our lives and a **moral** basis for our actions (the magisterium of **religion**).¹*

Is it any wonder then that the statement, “*You can’t prove the existence of God,*” is so commonly employed for the purpose of discouraging conversations that seek to give an evidential case for the reality of God as the creator of the heavens and the earth? The apparent goal of those who employ that slogan is to both denigrate the “God hypothesis” by categorizing it as fantasy, and then isolate it from the *certitude* which, they say, comes “only” through *scientific* investigation. This ploy is grounded on the naïve assumption that *scientific* discourse **alone** belongs in the category of *provable* fact.

For the sake of full disclosure, even as a Christian I do not challenge Gould’s resolve to shield science from the jaws of biblical dogma for the reason that the Bible, too, effectively² elevates science as a valid means to understand nature *on its own terms*.³ Yet at the same time, I do challenge Gould’s absolute confidence that one can attain *factual certainty* by “doing” science. Former atheist, the late Antony Flew, after having repudiated atheism, stated in the account of his conversion that scientists are indeed disinclined to acknowledge the philosophical limitations of their own fields in regard to attaining truth.⁴ For example, the cause of the material universe can’t *possibly* be accounted for in *scientific* terms for the reason that, prior to its beginning, there was neither matter nor energy nor space nor time by which scientific processes could bring it about; not even conceptually. In addition, every multi-cellular living form is a functional teleological system; a collage of interconnecting complexities constructed according to specifications from the syntactical code that is contained in DNA. According to Flew, both of these realities led him to abandon his atheism altogether.⁵ So although science aids in our understanding of many areas, it cannot begin to explain the profound wonder of both the existence of the cosmos as a whole and the functional, exquisitely-complex living systems that inhabit so much of our world.

It is also problematic that *empirical*⁶ investigations (as opposed to *mathematical* calculations) don’t have the *capacity* to yield provable truths. Scientific conclusions to some extent are always tentative

¹ ([Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life](#). Bantam Books, Random House, 1999), p. 175. **Boldface mine.**

² The term “science” was coined by William Whewell well after Bible times in 1833.

³ See my essay, “Romans 1:18-20,” together with all my papers, at my website: www.christianityontheoffense.com

⁴ Quoting Einstein, he stated, “*The man of science is a poor philosopher.*” Antony Flew w. R. Varghese. [There is a God](#). (Harper One, 2007), p. 91.

⁵ Flew, *Ibid*, pp. 135-6.

⁶ By empirical I am excluding mathematical calculations by instead fixing our attention onto phenomena that are perceived by our senses.

for the reason that the means of measuring *actual things* are only as good as the instruments that calculate their *actual* weights, sizes, angles, etc. Consequently, the body of evidence Christians appeal to (that can't be proved) are in the **very same boat** as that of every other claimant who advances their respect to truth claim. Nothing empirical science analyzes can ultimately be proved, just the same as for Christian claims. I say this NOT to diminish the enormous contributions scientific research has made to enhance our engagement with the natural world. Yet these successes are heightened only because of contributions from mathematical formulations *because* they correlate with the structure of the cosmos, which further vindicates Christian belief that our Creator isn't only powerful, but also an *intelligent* Being.⁷

When naysaying skeptics either belittle or simply deny belief in a personal intelligent God, I want to ask what it is they propose to offer in its place as the potential causal agent of the above two phenomena just cited. In truth, the very propensity of skeptics to limit their mission to theological demolition betrays a profoundly **anti**-scientific posture. Philosopher of Science Dr. Stephen Meyer has noted that in Charles Darwin's seminal work, *On the Origin of Species*,⁸ he employed the investigational principle called abduction, also known as "inference to the best explanation" **among a pool of multiple-competing hypotheses**.⁹ This methodology specifies that followers of the scientific method don't run to claim victory after defeating an opposing hypothesis. To the extent that they are committed to truth, they instead study the very phenomenon in question in every single one of its relevant aspects. They then proceed to construct a working hypothesis in their endeavor to identify the cause(s) of the existence (or occurrence) of that same phenomenon, which in turn becomes the "guidebook" for the investigational program by which to assess the correctness of the initial hypothesis. In an ideal world, each competing researcher will deem every other well-intentioned researcher to be a co-explorer in the common endeavor to get to the bottom of the truth of the nature of the phenomenon in question.

In light of the above investigational method employed by Darwin, the skeptics who laud his methods logically put themselves under obligation to, with him, present their own hypothesis which they deem addresses the above phenomena more comprehensively. It is not sufficient that they claim to have toppled theistic belief on the assertion that, as they echo, "*God's existence can't be proved!*" Let them instead propose their "scientific" explanation (based on purely naturalistic *scientific* assumptions) of the existence of a cosmos that is the result of a beginning from out of absolutely nothing in the Big Bang. And on the same terms, let them also propose a "superior" *naturalistic* program as to how life, in all of its present complexity and sophistication, is supposed to have arisen from code specified in DNA. Indeed, let the skeptic accept the challenge posed by the prophet in Isaiah 40:23a, who said "*Lift up your eyes on high and see: who [or 'what'?] created these?*" For to instead evade this challenge is to fail to intellectually engage with commonly acknowledged wonders of nature. After all, the truth that God's existence cannot be proved cuts both ways. For skepticism too can't *prove* the validity of its own principles or conclusions.

It is my judgment that S. J. Gould's "magisterium of science" may *describe*, but will never *account for*, these phenomena **precisely because** it is constricted by naturalistic strictures; while the case for the reality of the God of the Bible, although not provable, wins on *scientific* grounds hands down (Psalm 19:1)!

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⁷ Flew, *Op.cit.* (4), pp. 107, 167.

⁸ "*If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. But I can find no such case.*" (Charles Darwin, (Harvard facsimile of 1859 version) p.189).

⁹ Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*. (Harper One, 2009), pp. 153-4.