

## CHAPTER

# *(fad and the Origin of the Universe*

I cannot think that this watch exists and has no watchmaker.

—Voltaire, *Les Cabales* (1772)

### 2.1. Is It Reasonable to Believe in God?

Most Americans believe in God. In fact, according to a recent Gallup poll, 56 percent of Americans say that religion plays a “very important” role in their lives. And when the Pew Research Center conducted polls in different countries, it found the United States to be much more religious than other developed Western nations. In France, only 14 percent say that religion is very important to them. In Great Britain, the figure is 18 percent; in Spain, 21 percent; and in Canada and Germany, 27 percent. However, Indonesians, Pakistanis, and Indians are even more religious than Americans. Thus, in terms of professed religious faith, Americans are “closer to people in developing nations than to the publics of developed nations.”

Meanwhile, the Gallup International Millennium Survey asked people in 60 countries whether they believed in God at all. Only 45 percent said they believed in a “personal” God, while another 30 percent said they believed in “some sort of spirit or life force.” The Gallup poll found that religious belief is strongest in the elderly and the uneducated and that the rate of belief is highest in West Africa, where Islam dominates. There, 99 percent believe in a personal God. In the United States, the figure is 86 percent, while Europeans “are the most agnostic.”

But we want to know more than what people believe—we want to know whether religious beliefs are *true*. Does God exist?

Did he create the universe? Does he listen to prayers? Some people might say that such questions are about faith, and so reason is irrelevant. The pronouncements of Scripture or the Church do not require confirmation by rational argument. It is tempting to let the matter rest there—some choose to believe, others do not, and that's all there is to it. But before reaching that conclusion, we should ask what evidence is available. Can good reasons be given to support belief in God? We should not say that religious belief is “merely” a matter of faith until we are sure that rational arguments cannot be found.

The problem is that God cannot be detected by ordinary means. He cannot be seen or heard or touched, and scientific instruments are useless. Some people say they can sense his presence, but others cannot. This suggests that belief in God is only a matter of inner conviction. Nonetheless, religious thinkers have offered various arguments for the existence of God.

## 2.2. The Argument from Design

The Argument from Design tries to infer God's existence from the nature of the world around us—the world contains wonders that are best explained by supposing that an intelligent designer created them. As we shall see, this thought can be developed in different ways.

**The Wonders of Nature.** The world is full of amazing things that we take for granted. Consider, for example, the human eye. It is made of parts that work together in intricate, complicated ways. The eye has an opening through which light enters, while a mechanism makes the opening larger or smaller depending on the amount of light present. The light then passes through a lens that focuses it on a sensitive surface, which in turn translates the patterns into signals that can be transmitted to the brain through the optic nerve. If any detail is changed, the whole process stops working. Imagine that there was no hole in the front of the eyeball, or no lens, or no nerve connecting it to the brain—then everything else would be pointless.

Countless other examples could be given. The plants and animals that populate the earth are all composed of parts that work together beautifully. These living things form a delicate but viable ecosystem. Plants are eaten by animals, who are eaten

by other animals, who die and rot and feed the plants. The earth itself, moreover, is exquisitely fitted to support the life on it, being just the right distance from the sun and having just the right temperature, water, and atmosphere. Considering all this, we might wonder whether it could all have arisen by chance. It looks like the work of an intelligent designer.

This line of thought has occurred to many people, but it was William Paley (1743-1805), an Anglican clergyman and teacher at Cambridge University, who developed it most memorably. Paley's favorite example was the eye. Even forgetting about the eye's ingenious construction, consider how it is situated in the head: For protection it is lodged in a deep, bony socket, which protects it with a layer of fat. There are lids to further protect it. Glands are constantly producing a wash to keep the eye moist, without which, once again, the whole contraption would be worthless.

But, one might ask, so what? Having observed these remarkable facts, the argument can continue in two ways.

**The Best-Explanation Argument.** First, we may note that the wonders of nature require some sort of explanation. How, exactly, did the various parts of the eye come to exist? One possibility is that it all happened by chance—the lens, the optic nerve, the eyelid, and all the rest just happened to spring into being simultaneously. How lucky for us! But that is hard to believe. Yet, if chance is eliminated, what remains? Intelligent design seems to be the alternative. The eye and the other wonders of nature could have been made by God. Thus we have the Best-Explanation Argument:

- (1) Either the wonders of nature occurred randomly, by chance, or they are the products of intelligent design.
- (2) Intelligent design explains the existence of these things much better than blind chance does.
- (3) Therefore, the wonders of nature are best explained as the products of intelligent design.

**The Same-Evidence Argument.** A different form of the argument appeals to the idea that *we have the same evidence* that the universe was designed by an intelligent creator as we have that other things, such as telescopes, were designed. To make this

point, Paley introduced one of the most famous analogies in the history of science, that of the watchmaker.

Suppose we find a watch lying on the ground. If we inspect it, we will conclude that it was designed by an intelligent being. After all, it is made of many small parts that work together to serve a purpose. In Paley's words, "[I]ts several parts . . . are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day. . . . [T]he inference we think is inevitable [is] that the watch must have had a maker." Thus, from the existence of the watch, we are entitled to infer the existence of a watchmaker. But do we not have exactly the same sort of evidence that the universe was made by an intelligent designer? The universe also consists of "parts framed and put together for a purpose"—namely, the purpose of housing intelligent life. And do we not have the same sort of evidence that some things in the universe—such as the eye, with its parts magnificently aligned for vision—were made by an intelligent designer? The Same-Evidence Argument, then, goes like this:

- (1) We conclude that watches were made by intelligent designers because they have parts that work together to serve a purpose.
- (2) We have the same evidence that the universe, and some of the natural objects in it, were made by an intelligent designer: they are also composed of parts that work together to serve a purpose.
- (3) Therefore, we are entitled to conclude that the universe was made by an intelligent designer.

**Hume's Objections.** These are impressive arguments, but are they sound? It would be nice if they were, because they would provide rational support for an ancient and satisfying way of understanding the universe. Unfortunately, these arguments are open to some crippling objections made by David Hume (1711-1776), the greatest English-speaking philosopher in history. Hume was a skeptic about religion at a time when skepticism could not be publicly acknowledged. So, he never came right out and said that he didn't believe. Instead, in his book *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, he chipped away at the foundations of belief by exposing weaknesses in various theistic

arguments. He did not allow *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* to be published in his lifetime; it was published after his death, in 1779.

We may begin by noting that the Argument from Design, in all its forms, tries to infer *what causes something* from information about the thing itself. In other words, we are to infer a *cause from its effects*. This is a common type of inference, but it is justified only when we have a specific sort of background information.

For example, suppose we are presented with an AIDS patient and asked what caused her disease. We could reply, with confidence, that she must have the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and this is the cause. But why are we entitled to infer that? It is because of our past experience. In the past we have seen plenty of cases in which HIV and AIDS were linked. Physicians have treated many patients with AIDS, and in each case the virus was present. Moreover, studies have identified the mechanism that connects HIV and AIDS, and other possible causes have been ruled out. We call upon this background knowledge when we are confronted with a new case *of the* disease. We know what generally causes AIDS, and we apply this knowledge to specific cases.

Can we infer, in the same way, that an act of divine creation caused the universe to exist? The problem is that we lack the sort of background knowledge that would permit this inference. If we had observed God creating universes many times in the past and had never seen a universe not create<sup>®</sup> by him, then we would be entitled to infer that he must have made our universe. But, in fact, we have no idea what causes universes to come into existence. We are familiar with only one universe; we did not observe its cause; and that's all we know.

The case of the watch is entirely different. When we examine the watch lying on the ground, we have lots of relevant background information. We have seen watches before, and we know that they are made by watchmakers. We can visit the factories where they are produced, and we know the names of the companies that make them. That is why we can say with such confidence that a particular watch must have been made by a watchmaker. This means that the Same-Evidence Argument is fatally flawed. Where causes are concerned, we have vastly more evidence about watches than about universes. Moreover,

these observations also cast doubt on the Best-Explanation Argument. Because we have so little experience with the creation of universes, and so little experience with the origin of natural objects, it seems too ambitious to assume that there are just two possibilities: random chance and intelligent design.

But suppose we set these points aside, and we do try to infer how the world came about. If we were serious about this, what would we conclude? What conjecture would seem most reasonable? The idea that the world was made by a single all-powerful, all-good deity would not be very plausible. After all, the world is not perfect. As impressive as the human body is, it is weak and vulnerable to disease. Some people have leprosy or muscular dystrophy. If our eyes were perfect, nobody would need glasses—and some of us, of course, are blind. Taking this into account, it might be more reasonable to conjecture that the world was made by a somewhat inept or malicious world-maker, or that we were made by an apprentice world-maker who had yet to master the craft. Again, we might notice that the world contains elements that work against one another—humans struggle to survive in an environment that is often hostile to them. This might lead us to speculate that the world was designed by a committee of world-makers working at odds with one another. Of course, no one believes such things. But the point is that these conjectures would be at least as reasonable as the idea that the world was made by a perfect God, *i.e.* we were seriously trying to infer the nature of the Creator from the nature of the Creation.

### **2.3. Evolution and Intelligent Design**

As the nineteenth century began, Hume's critique of the Design Argument was well known, but it was not considered decisive. Instead, Paley's argument was widely accepted. In the decades to come, Paley's books, and not Hume's, would be required reading in British universities. The reason for this is clear. The hypothesis of divine creation provided a way to account for the wonders of nature. Hume criticized this hypothesis, but he had nothing to replace it with. Why should people abandon a useful way of understanding the world when they have none better? Thus, the hypothesis of divine creation retained its appeal until an alternative account was found. In 1859, Charles Darwin provided such an account with his Theory of Natural Selection.

**How Natural Selection Works.** Many people assume that Darwin was the first person to come up with the idea of evolution, but he was not. In the early nineteenth century, it was already known that the earth is very old and that different kinds of plants and animals have lived at different times. Many people speculated that the appearance and disappearance of all those species might be explained by evolution. But evolution was rejected by scientific thinkers because no one could imagine how one species could change into another. Instead they accepted the theory of *catastrophism*, which holds that a series of great disasters has occurred throughout history—the last, perhaps, being Noah’s flood—in which the existing species were destroyed and then replaced by God in a new act of creation. Today catastrophism may seem bizarre, but in the early nineteenth century it was the best theory available, and many scientists accepted it. Then Darwin changed everything by explaining how evolution might take place. The Theory of Natural Selection, which he set out in his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859), supplied the mechanism needed to explain how species evolve over time.

Darwin’s genius was in realizing that three well-known facts, taken together, could explain evolutionary change. First, there is the *geometrical increase of populations*. Organisms reproduce in such numbers that, if left unchecked, the members of any one species would soon overrun the earth. (Starting from a few rabbits, there would soon be millions, and shortly thereafter trillions, until we were hip-deep in rabbits.) Second, there is the *heritability of traits*. An organism’s descendants tend to resemble it—each individual inherits the characteristics of its parents. Third, there is *variation*. Although individuals resemble their parents, they are not exactly like their parents. There are random small differences between them.

Putting these three facts together, Darwin argued as follows:

- (1) Organisms tend to reproduce in such numbers that, if all survived to reproduce again, the members of any one species would overrun the earth. This does not (and could not) happen. No species can continue to multiply unchecked. Each population reaches a certain maximum size, and then its growth stops.
- (2) It follows that a high percentage of organisms must die before they are able to reproduce. Therefore,

there will be a “struggle for existence” to determine which individuals live and which die. What determines the outcome of this struggle? What determines which individuals live and which die? There are two possibilities: It could be the result of random causes, or it could be related to the differences between individuals. Sometimes it is random. That is, the reason one organism survives to reproduce while another does not will sometimes be due to causes that have nothing to do with their particular characteristics. One animal may be struck by lightning, for example, while another is not; and this may be mere luck. But sometimes the fact that one individual survives to reproduce while another does not will be due to their different characteristics. It works like this:

- There are differences (“variations”) between members of species. Darwin did not know how or why such variations first arise, but today we know it has to do with genetic mutation.
- Some of these differences will affect the organism’s relation to its environment, in ways that are helpful or harmful to its chances for survival and reproduction.
- Therefore, because of their particular characteristics, some individuals will be more likely to survive and reproduce than others.

Here are two examples of how this happens. Suppose wolves live in an environment that is growing colder. The wolves with thicker fur will be more likely to survive and reproduce than the wolves with thinner fur. The thicker fur does not appear in response to the weather—it is just a random variation. Nonetheless, it benefits the wolves in the changed environment: wolves with thinner coats will die in the cold, while wolves with thicker coats will survive to reproduce.

Or suppose that a bird like the African finch migrates to an area in which the food supply consists of nuts. Finches with thinner beaks will not be able to crack the nuts; finches with thicker beaks will. The finches with thicker beaks will thus be more likely to survive and reproduce.



- (3) When they reproduce, organisms pass on their characteristics to their descendants. Again, Darwin did not know how this happens, but he knew that it does: An organism's offspring will have most of its characteristics. Today, we know this has to do with genes.
- (4) Therefore, since the organisms with helpful characteristics survive to reproduce, passing those characteristics on to their children, the characteristics that have "survival value" tend to be more widely represented in future generations, while other characteristics tend to be eliminated from the species. Future generations of wolves and finches will, on average, have thicker fur and thicker beaks.
- (5) In this way, a species will be modified—the descendants of the original stock will come to have different characteristics than their ancestors—and, when enough of these modifications have accumulated, we call the result a new species. This is how natural selection works.

The Theory of Natural Selection gave evolution a sound basis, and soon it replaced catastrophism as the dominant account of why different species have lived at different times. It also provided an alternative to the hypothesis of intelligent design, without appealing to blind chance. Rather than explaining the wonders of nature as God's handiwork, we can account for them as the result of natural selection. %

### **Can Natural Selection Account for Biological Complexity?**

When Darwin was enrolled at Cambridge University in the late 1820s, all students were required to read Paley's *Natural Theology*. Darwin later wrote in his *Autobiography* that "I was charmed and convinced of the long line of argumentation." At that time, the young Darwin intended to become a clergyman. He abandoned this ambition after completing an around-the-world voyage on the HMS *Beagle* from 1831 to 1835. By 1838 he had formulated the Theory of Natural Selection. After discovering natural selection, Darwin was no longer charmed by Paley's reasoning. Darwin considered the Theory of Natural Selection to be a replacement for the idea that particular aspects of nature were consciously designed. "The old argument of design in nature,"

he said, “which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, fails, now that the law of natural selection has been discovered.”

Darwin’s views gradually won over the scientific community, but many people have remained skeptical of evolution, or at least skeptical of the idea that evolution eliminates the need for a designer. In the 1970s and 1980s, “creation science” came into vogue in the United States. Creationists accepted the literal truth of Genesis, and they looked for principles to explain the diversity and geographic distribution of life. Activists mounted a campaign to have creation science taught in the public schools as an alternative to evolution, but they failed because creation science was so obviously inadequate. Today the campaign has moved on to a more modest claim, namely, that “intelligent design” should be taught as an alternative to evolution in explaining the origin of species. In 1996, a scientist named Michael J. Behe wrote *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, in which he argued that some biological systems cannot be the result of natural selection alone because they are “irreducibly complex.” Intelligent design, Behe said, is a more plausible explanation of such systems. *Christianity Today* named *Darwin’s Black Box* its “Book of the Year.”

Why is natural selection supposed to be inadequate? Behe’s arguments are too technical in their scientific detail for us to consider. However, it is fair to say that they have not yet convinced many scientists. Typically, the proponents of “intelligent design” point out that complex organs such as the eye are constructed of numerous parts, each of which appears to be useless except when working with the others. How are we to conceive of the evolution of all these parts? Are we to imagine a primitive eye, a primitive tear duct, a primitive lid, and all the rest developing alongside one another? The Theory of Natural Selection says that complex organs are the result of small variations that “add up” to the mature organ after many generations of evolutionary change. But there’s a problem with this. Even if the fully developed eye is useful to its possessor, of what use is a half-eye that still has many generations to go before it is complete? Why should a half-eye be “selected for” and preserved for further development? These problems, say the critics, are unsolvable.

But this problem is not new. Darwin himself was aware of it. To address it, he made two points. First, he emphasized that a bit of anatomy may originally be preserved by natural selection

for one purpose, but then later, that anatomy might be used for a different purpose. Nature may jury-rig a complex structure out of whatever materials happen to be around. Second, Darwin called attention to what present-day theorists call the *intensification of function*. A biological structure that originally conferred a certain benefit might later confer that same benefit to a much greater degree.

To explain the eye, Darwin said, all we have to imagine is that a nerve only slightly sensitive to light gives an organism some small advantage. Then we can understand the establishment of the first primitive eye. From that simple thing will eventually come our complex eyes.

In living bodies, variation will cause the slight alterations, generation will multiply them almost infinitely, and natural selection will pick out with unerring skill each improvement. Let this process go on for millions on millions of years; and during each year on millions of individuals of many kinds; and may we not believe that a living optical instrument might thus be formed as superior to one of glass, as the works of the Creator are to those of man?

If the eye itself can be formed in this way, then so can the tear ducts, the eyelid, the bone, and all the rest. Take the lid, for example: Imagine that a primitive eye has been established and that in some organisms a slight variation has resulted in a small fold of skin that somewhat protects it. That variation is random (arising from genetic mutation), but because having this fold of skin makes the primitive eye better, this new feature will be selected for, and further modified, in the usual way. Darwin's analysis has withstood the test of time. Today it forms the basis for scientific thought about these matters.

After Darwin, the Best-Explanation Argument was finally refuted. Hume had pointed out its logical deficiencies, but he could not supply a better way of understanding the apparent design of nature. After taking away design as an explanation, he left nothing in its place. It is no wonder, then, that in the early nineteenth century even the brightest people continued to believe in design. But Darwin did what Hume could not do: He provided a detailed alternative, giving people something different to believe. The Best-Explanation Argument had considered only two ways of explaining the wonders of nature: chance and design. After Darwin, there was a third way.

## 2.4. The First Cause Argument

Today we know—or at least we think we know—that our universe began in a “Big Bang” almost 14 billion years ago and the earth was formed around 4.5 billion years ago. But what caused the Big Bang? Why is there a universe at all, rather than nothing? This question requires some sort of answer, and here, once again, it may be thought that the hypothesis of divine creation provides the answer. We may conjecture that God was the “first cause” of the universe.

This thought can be developed in at least three ways.

**The Idea That God Was the First Cause in the Long Chain of Causes.** One line of reasoning appeals to the principle that *everything must have a cause*. My watch was made by watchmakers working with metals extracted from the earth. Where did the watchmakers and the metals come from? The watchmakers came from their parents, while geological processes explain how the metals formed. The chain of causes can be traced back further: Those parents descended from other people, who descended from still other people; the earth itself was formed from matter moving through space; and so on. If we trace everything back far enough, we eventually come to the Big Bang, which in turn must have been caused by something. But, it is said, the chain of causes must stop somewhere; we must come eventually to the First Cause of Everything. The argument goes like this:

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- (1) Everything must have a cause.
- (2) The chain of causes cannot reach back indefinitely; at some point, we must come to a First Cause.
- (3) The First Cause we may call “God.”

As a statement of faith, this line of thought may be appealing. But if it is meant to prove God’s existence, it fails. The main problem is that this reasoning is self-contradictory. It begins by saying that everything must have a cause, but then it goes on to posit the existence of something, God, that has no cause. We must choose: Do we seriously believe that everything must have a cause, or not? If we seriously believe that everything must have a cause, then we must ask what caused God. On the other hand, if we believe that “the chain of causes must stop

somewhere,” why not say that it stops with the Big Bang? After all, the Big Bang is as far back as science can go, so it is as good a place to stop as any.

Also, this argument doesn’t actually tell us that God exists. Its conclusion is merely that we may call the ultimate cause of everything “God.” Even if we agree to this, we would not be agreeing that an all-powerful, benevolent deity created the universe. The word “God” might now (for all we know) be the name of an incredibly dense point of mass and energy that preceded the Big Bang. Once this point is appreciated, it becomes clear how misleading it is to use the word “God” in this way.

### **The Idea That God Caused the Universe “as a Whole” to Exist.**

We may think of God not as another link in the chain of causes, but as the source of the entire chain itself. The “chain of causes and effects” occurs within the universe. But now we want an explanation of the whole thing—why does the universe exist at all? Science deals only with causes and effects within the universe, and so science cannot tell us why the universe itself exists. For that, we need religion.

Thus, a different form of the argument might be:

- (1) Everything that exists within the universe is part of a vast system of causes and effects.
- (2) But the universe itself requires an explanation—why does it exist?
- (3) The only plausible explanation is that God created it.
- (4) Therefore, to explain the existence of the universe, it is reasonable to believe in God.

But this line of thought has its own problems. It is like the Argument from Design in that it attempts to infer the cause of the universe from the existence of the universe itself. The universe exists—that’s for sure—but what caused it to come into being? According to step (3), it is most plausible to suppose that God created it. And we may be inclined to agree with this, because of our religious traditions. But Hume’s observations are again relevant. To infer the cause of something, we need background information. To infer the cause of a watch, for example, we need information about what kinds of things cause watches to exist. However, we do not have this kind of

information about universes. We have never seen a universe being created, and so we can draw no conclusions about what kinds of things create them.

The First Cause Argument is like a lot of philosophical arguments in that we start with a promising idea—in this case, that divine creation might explain the origin of the universe—but run into problems when we try to formulate it into an explicit chain of reasoning. We might now be tempted to give up on the original thought. But before we do, there is one more idea to consider.

## 2.5. The Idea That God Is a Necessary Being

Peter van Inwagen is a distinguished contemporary philosopher who converted to Christianity as an adult, after he had already done first-rate work in philosophy. Van Inwagen writes that, after he became a Christian, the world seemed very different to him. Before his conversion, he says, “I can remember having a picture of the cosmos, the physical universe, as a self-subsistent thing, something that is just *there and* requires no explanation.” But now he can no longer think of the world in that way:

I can still call the image to mind (I *think* it’s the same image), and it still represents the whole world, but it is now associated with a felt conviction ... that it must depend on something else, something not represented by any feature of the image, and which must be . . . radically different in kind from what the image represents.

If the universe is not “self-subsistent,” then it cannot exist by itself. Rather, it must be sustained by something else. But what sort of “something else” could sustain the whole universe? The obvious candidate for this peculiar status is God. God, according to traditional religious thought, is self-sufficient. He is the cause of everything else, but he himself has no cause. He exists eternally, without a cause and without any beginning or end.

What sort of being could be “self-sufficient”? What could be the cause of everything else and yet not itself require a cause? It all sounds very mysterious. But, according to some philosophers, there is a kind of being that could have these characteristics, namely, a *necessary* being. A necessary being is a being that, by its very nature, could not fail to exist. With this

idea in mind, we can formulate one final version of the First Cause Argument:

- (1) The universe is a dependent thing. It cannot exist by itself; it can exist only if it is sustained by something else—something that is not dependent.
- (2) God, a necessary being, is the only thing that is not dependent.
- (3) Therefore, the universe is sustained by God.

Does this argument provide good reason to believe that God exists? It is certainly full of puzzling notions. It is puzzling why the universe must be dependent. Why couldn't it exist without being supported by something else? It is puzzling why the universe could be created only by something self-sufficient—why couldn't it be created by something that also depends on something else? But perhaps the most puzzling thing is the notion of a being whose existence is necessary. What sense can be made of this?

The idea of God as a “necessary being” goes back at least as far as St. Anselm (1033-1109), the English monk who is sometimes called the father of medieval scholasticism. Anselm suggested that we conceive of God as “that than which none greater can be conceived.” God, in other words, has every possible perfection: He is perfect in knowledge, in power, in goodness, and in every other way imaginable. There is no conceivable way in which he could be better. Anselm maintained, moreover, that this is true *by definition*—trying to imagine God as having an imperfection is like trying to imagine a married bachelor or a triangle with five sides. You can certainly imagine a being *similar* to God that lacks some perfection, but then you are not thinking of God. The concept of God *is* the concept of a perfect being, just as the concept of a bachelor is the concept of an unmarried man or the concept of a triangle is the concept of a three-sided figure.

But Anselm noticed that something remarkable seems to follow from this: If a being is perfect by definition, then that being must exist. After all, if it did not exist, it would not be perfect. (A perfect being that exists is certainly better than the mere idea of a perfect being.) Hence, it is impossible that God not exist, and this is what we mean by a “necessary being.” A necessary being *could not fail* to exist. You and I are not necessary beings, because if history had gone differently, then our

parents might never have met, and so we might never have existed. But God is different. He had to exist.

This line of reasoning is known as the Ontological Argument. The Ontological Argument is unlike the Argument from Design or the First Cause Argument in that those arguments frequently occur to ordinary intelligent people. Any reflective person, considering the wonders of nature and the origin of the universe, is apt to wonder whether divine creation is needed to explain them. The Ontological Argument, on the other hand, may sound like a philosopher's trick. How can the existence of anything follow from its definition?

Yet the Ontological Argument has persuaded a number of thinkers. René Descartes (1596-1650), whom we will meet again in this book, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), the philosopher-scientist who along with Newton discovered calculus, both believed that the Ontological Argument is sound. Others, however, have disagreed.

In Anselm's own day, a monk named Gaunilo argued that if this argument proves that God exists, it must also prove that a perfect island exists. Suppose we say that "Islandia" is the name for our concept of a perfect island. Islandia, by definition, is perfect—it cannot be improved on. It follows, then, that Islandia must exist, because if it did not exist, it would not be a perfect island. By the same method, we could prove that a perfect banana exists, or that a perfect man exists. But this, Gaunilo observed, is absurd. Therefore, the Ontological Argument cannot be sound.

Gaunilo's reasoning shows that the Ontological Argument must be mistaken, but it does not explain the nature of the mistake. That was left to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), considered by many to be the greatest modern philosopher Kant observed that whether a thing is perfect depends on its properties—whether an island is perfect, for example, depends on its size, its climate, its natural beauty, and so on. Existence, however, is not a property in this sense. Whether such an island exists is a matter of whether anything in the world *has* those properties. Thus, we cannot prove that the island—or anything else—exists just by stipulating that it is "by definition" perfect. The definition of "Islandia" tells us only what Islandia would be like if it existed; it cannot tell us whether there really is such a thing. Similarly, the definition of "God" tells us only what sort of being God would be if he existed. Whether he does exist is another matter.



**Conclusion.** The whole business of seeking “arguments” for the existence of God might be considered suspect. People rarely believe in God because of arguments. Instead, they simply accept the teachings of their culture, or they believe in God because of some urgent inner conviction. Arguments seem irrelevant.

But arguments are not irrelevant if we want to know what is reasonable to believe. A belief is reasonable only if there is good evidence for its truth. The arguments we have considered are the most impressive attempts yet made to prove the existence of God. But none of these arguments succeed. They all contain flaws, and so they must be judged failures.

The fact that these arguments fail does not mean that God doesn’t exist—it only means that these particular arguments do not prove it. There may be other arguments, yet to be discovered, that will be more successful. In the meantime, the idea that God has created the universe may continue to play an important part in the thinking of religious believers. Divine creation may be accepted as part of a satisfying worldview, even if it is not rationally necessary. Like van Inwagen, many thoughtful people may even find this way of thinking irresistible. But, for the present at least, such beliefs cannot be regarded as rationally supported. This conclusion will not surprise those religious people who, in any case, have always regarded their convictions as matters of faith, not logic.

## *If the Problem of*

Misery’s the river of the world.

### **3.1. Why Do Good People**

Job was prosperous. He owned loved all ten of his children. He his neighbors and a leader in the community. This combination of riches a admired person in the region. But Foreigners invaded Job’s lands, ing off with most of his cattle. A f him penniless. Shortly afterward, lapse, killing all of his children. Tl ease that left him covered with so that people could not recognize f

When Job’s friends came to turned to accusation. They were Job must have done something Surely, they thought, God would he deserved it. “Does God perve will not reject a blameless man, nc Another told him, “Know that Go guilt deserves.” But Job knew hir could not explain why God had al

This story is recounted in t Jewish writing that is included in earliest document we have in whicl posed. Of course, the existence of takes a nonreligious view of the w-

## OTHER SOURCES

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## 1.5 IS FAITH AN ANSWER?

### Believer or Questioner?

It is not easy to say what religion is, or what makes a person a religious person. Is believing in God enough? There are many ways to think about God,

and some beliefs might that God or the gods ex doesn't like God, or ev God, but it sounds odd

Or imagine another t cause and effect and tir caused the universe to e This philosopher also b< gious person.

If believing in God is person? One answer is f< in God, and believes in ( people in the examples ;

But it looks as if we h original question was "V swer was faith. But what i.e., trust that he will do t that it exists even though else? There is no simple i

The following essays t tries to explain why he h; though he has no eviden< sition a "believer." The ; consequences. It argues t up anything he or she bel questioner.

## YES: BELIEVER

### "Accepting Limits"

I have reached the point ir up what I have learned. I life, and now I want to tak has life made of me?

I could talk about my would have to talk about s the happy times with my should I include my first r as well.

However, I can't talk ab scribe one particular way why I believe in God. I die ally changed. I am not goi as belief. Actually I do wor

and some beliefs might not be enough. For example, suppose a person believes that God or the gods exist but is terribly afraid of them. Or suppose the person doesn't like God, or even hates him. Is that person religious? He believes in God, but it sounds odd to say he is a religious person.

Or imagine another example. Suppose a philosopher studies the concepts of cause and effect and time, and after careful reasoning decides that something caused the universe to exist. The nature of the world requires a Creator, or God. This philosopher also believes in God, but again, he does not seem to be a religious person.

If believing in God is not enough, then what else is necessary to be a religious person? One answer is faith. That is, a religious person is a person who has faith in God, and believes in God on the basis of faith. That is why neither of the two people in the examples above is religious. Neither has faith.

But it looks as if we have answered our question with another question. The original question was "What makes someone a religious person," and our answer was faith. But what is faith? Is faith in God like faith in your family doctor, i.e., trust that he will do the right thing? Or is it like faith in electricity, i.e., belief that it exists even though you cannot see it or understand it? Or is it something else? There is no simple answer.

The following essays explore different aspects of faith. In the first, the writer tries to explain why he has faith in God. He says it is OK to believe in God even though he has no evidence at all for his belief. We can call anyone with this position a "believer." The second essay says the believer's attitude has terrible consequences. It argues that a person should have some good reasons to back up anything he or she believes. A person who agrees with the second essay is a questioner.

x

## YES: BELIEVER

### *"Accepting Limits"*

I have reached the point in my life where I am beginning to feel the need to sum up what I have learned. I want to start tying up loose ends. I've had a long, full life, and now I want to take stock. What was it all about? What was it for? What has life made of me?

I could talk about my accomplishments in my work. And, to be honest, I would have to talk about some failures, too. I could spend hours thinking about the happy times with my wonderful wife, Jean, and our daughter, Chris. But should I include my first wife? Of course. That big mistake was part of my life as well.

However, I can't talk about everything at once. For the present, I want to describe one particular way that I have grown over the years. I want to explain why I believe in God. I didn't always believe. It is a part of me that has gradually changed. I am not going to discuss religion. Religion is not the same thing as belief. Actually I do worship with my congregation regularly, I work with the

people there to help the less fortunate, and I try to live by our religion's principles. Religion has become more important to me in the past few years. But I want to go back to the foundations, which is belief in God. I practice religion because I believe in God, not the other way around. The belief is primary.

I will begin with an observation. It is a fact (I think) that more elderly people believe in God than young people. If you took a poll of one hundred college students and one hundred retired people, asking each group "Do you believe in God," I think that a higher percentage of retired people would answer yes than college students. Why is that? Why do more people tend to believe in God as they get older?

The most common answer is that older people are more afraid of death. They feel death approaching, it is frightening, and they believe in God because the belief is a comfort to them. It is a way of denying death. But that is not why I believe in God. To me, death is a puzzle rather than a terror. I have lived my life. I am ready for it to end. In fact, I'm a little curious about dying.

I have come to believe in God by a different route. What my life has taught me is that we human beings are not all-powerful and all-knowing. We are limited. There are some things we simply cannot understand. With all our science and technology and learning, the world is still, ultimately, a mysterious place. Elderly people have seen enough failed experiments and heard enough shallow, empty explanations that they know about limits. They have lost the blind optimism of youth.

Accepting limits is the first step toward belief in God, and it is a difficult step to take. As a young man, I denied it. I worked hard in school, and I was fascinated by the incredible wealth of knowledge and information accumulated in universities. After college, I went on to study medicine, confident that science could defeat the age-old enemies of mankind—famine, disease, war, and even death itself. For a number of years I practiced medicine, relieving pain, helping some, extending lives, and, through my research, adding a little to our medical knowledge.

But as the years passed, my doubts began to grow. I began to wonder how much of the world and man I really understood. How much did anyone really understand? The science of medicine has grown tremendously in my lifetime. But it seems that for every breakthrough we also confront new problems. Take one example. In the sixties, some brilliant surgeons developed the heart transplant technique. In those days the possibilities seemed endless. If we could transplant hearts, then perhaps we could transplant other organs. And as the transplants wore out, we could replace them with new organs from accident victims. Theoretically a person could live forever. One little problem was that the bodies of the patients kept rejecting the new hearts. They treated the new heart like a foreign invader rather than a life-saving improvement. We assumed that a few minor adjustments could solve the problem, but the adjustments didn't work. We could suppress the rejection for some time, but blocking the rejection led to other problems. We learned from our "advance" that the immune system was much more complex and subtle than we realized, and that heart transplants were not the great triumph we thought they were.

And now of course the system. Hundreds of thousands more have the infection? We don't know. It's challenging her. The more

I practiced medicine for to serve my community. I on their feet. But there were have treated differently if in the first decade or so to snap back. I was confident in a paradoxical position. Diseases are challenges, but will eventually die. We can

As the years passed, and about death in a different way asking "Why does death have a deal of the scientific literature studies of cells and organs, can describe the process. But the point of collapse. It is just

Death is a limit in two dimensions. allotted time on earth. That's time living as I had with friends way. It makes no sense. We cannot proud intellects. Even if we the larger why. Why do we to die in the end? Why does answer these questions, and then on life. I was no longer the confident had to admit that we do not everything, and that the world completely new way of thinking

Once I admitted some limitations young man, I had assumed origins of the universe. But allowing to say about what came into other example. When I began to thought I surely understood myself married to a woman I have. I was an overconfident others any better than I understood government aid would inevitably government programs and homelessness, broken families

And now of course there is AIDS, an incurable, fatal disease of the immune system. Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide have already died, and many more have the infection. Why? Where did it come from, and what can stop it? We don't know. It seems almost as if nature is cruelly taunting us for challenging her. The more we learn, the more we realize we don't know.

I practiced medicine for over forty years, and I'm glad I had the opportunity to serve my community. I helped a lot of people heal themselves and get back on their feet. But there were tragic cases. Some were beyond hope, some I might have treated differently if I had a second chance, some were just baffling. During the first decade or so the deaths were very difficult to take, but I was able to snap back. I was confident that science could fight death. But a physician is in a paradoxical position. For a doctor, the greatest enemy is death. Injury and disease are challenges, but death is the ultimate defeat. And yet, every patient will eventually die. We can avoid it for some time, but death is inevitable.

As the years passed, and I witnessed more and more deaths, I began to think about death in a different way. From asking "Why did this patient die," I began asking "Why does death happen at all?" Why does everyone die? I read a good deal of the scientific literature, and I discovered that, beneath the jargon and the studies of cells and organs, the fact is that no one knows why death occurs. We can describe the process. But we don't understand why the body deteriorates to the point of collapse. It is just one of the limits we must face.

Death is a limit in two different ways. Obviously death limits each person's allotted time on earth. That was disturbing and painful to me, but I could continue living as I had with that limit. However, death is also a limit in another way. It makes no sense. We can't understand why it happens. It is a limit on our proud intellects. Even if we learn more about cell processes, we cannot answer the larger why. Why do we have such a strong will to live if we are all doomed to die in the end? Why does the world work this way? I realized I couldn't answer these questions, and that realization gradually changed my whole outlook on life. I was no longer the confident, optimistic young man I had been. I finally had to admit that we do not have answers, that there are no rational reasons for everything, and that the world is really beyond our comprehension. That was a completely new way of thinking. It made me a much more humble person.

Once I admitted some limits on our understanding, I discovered others. As a young man, I had assumed that the astronomers would eventually explain the origins of the universe. But all they talk about is the "Big Bang." They have nothing to say about what came *before* this Big Bang, or why it occurred. Here is another example. When I began my career, I thought I was in control of my life. I thought I surely understood myself and what I wanted. But somehow I found myself married to a woman I didn't love, behaving in ways I didn't want to behave. I was an overconfident, ambitious fool. Moreover, I didn't understand others any better than I understood myself. I thought expanded education and government aid would inevitably lead to a better society. But in spite of vast government programs and billions of dollars, we still have rampant crime, homelessness, broken families, and crippling debt. We seem to be in decline.

One of my greatest pleasures now is music. The rhythms, harmonies, and tone colors are always delightful, and sometimes the sheer beauty is almost overwhelming. Can anyone explain that beauty? Why do I feel that way? And how did Mozart create such wonderful, inspiring sounds? No one knows. All we can do is bow our heads in the face of such mysteries.

We are like children around a campfire in the forest at night. Within the little circle of light everything is cozy and comfortable, but we are surrounded by a huge, black darkness filled with strange shapes and unidentifiable, frightening noises.

What I have learned in my threescore and ten is that the world is greater than we can know. We have a little knowledge, but we are severely limited in what we can understand. Why am I here? Why do I die? Why does the world work the way it does? Why do I do what I do? We cannot find answers to these questions through science or reason. Therefore, I have *chosen* an answer. I choose to believe in God, an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving Creator. He created me to worship Him. That belief provides answers to all the other questions. It tells me why I am here, why I die, why I do what I do, and why the world is the way it is.

I cannot find answers to these questions in science or philosophy, so I have *faith* that God exists. I have never been impressed by miracles (though they may occur). I have never heard a Voice of God commanding me to believe. In fact, I do not have any evidence that God exists. What I have learned is that some questions can't be decided by evidence or facts or reasons, because reality is just too complex and obscure for us to understand. For answers to these questions I rely on a different part of human nature and a different method. I have faith. I choose to believe the answer that seems best to me.

This is a two-step process. First we must admit that we cannot understand everything. Then, after recognizing our weakness and impotence, we can take the second step of freely choosing to believe in God. Where science and intellect cannot provide answers, faith and commitment can. Faith is not proof. It is not even rational. Indeed, where we have proofs and reasons, faith is out of place. But in so many areas, I have learned, we have no proofs or evidence or reasons. When we realize those limitations, faith is the next step. It is beyond proof and argument.

I am aware of my critics. Some people will say I am wrong and should not have faith. But if scientists cannot explain death or the universe or beauty, then how can they say that my answer is wrong? If they knew why we die, or how the universe began, then I would listen to them, and I would believe their answers. But they don't have the answers; they don't know what is true or what is false. They cannot prove that there is or that there isn't a God. So how can they say my belief in God is wrong?

Many people agree with me that scientists and philosophers do not have all the answers. But many refuse to take the next step and believe in God because of their pride and misplaced confidence. I am not so confident. Since we cannot find answers based on evidence and reasons, I have accepted an answer on different grounds. I believe in God on the basis of faith.

## Key Concepts

limits  
understand

## Critical Questions

1. What lesson should we learn from the believer?
2. How did the believer look on life?
3. What are some examples? Do you agree?
4. If you agree with the  $\leq$ , do you also believe we will?
5. How does the believer have faith? Is he right?
6. Does the believer think about God, then why can he not understand?
7. Consider an analogy. If no one knows for sure, teachers, therefore, have no parents' income, or so-called (if anything). Should e.g., injections of extract

## NO: QUESTIONER

### *"Faith and Its Consequence*

In many religions faith is h  
Corinthians, for example, St  
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But is faith a virtue? Is sor acting in a praiseworthy ma shows that it is actually *not* a fact, faith can be very dange

To say that you believe something, you do not have good evidence, decide to believe that an omniscient being exists.

### Key Concepts

limits	death	faith
understand	mystery	God

### Critical Questions

1. What lesson should we learn from the heart transplant technique, according to the believer?
2. How did the believer's reflections on death lead to a basic change in his outlook on life?
3. What are some examples of things we cannot understand, according to this essay? Do you agree that no one understands these things?
4. If you agree with the essay that we do not understand these mysteries, do you also believe we will *never* understand them?
5. How does the believer reply to his critics, i.e., those who say he should not have faith? Is he right?
6. Does the believer think that he understands God? If not, but he has beliefs about God, then why couldn't he have beliefs about death, or other things he does not understand?
7. Consider an analogy. It is very difficult to know what works in education. No one knows for sure why some children succeed and some fail. Should teachers, therefore, have faith that success depends on genetics? Or diet? Or parents' income, or something else? No one knows for sure what cures cancer (if anything). Should a patient with cancer have faith in one type of cure, e.g., injections of extracts from calves' brains?

## NO: QUESTIONER

### *"Faith and Its Consequences"*

In many religions faith is held up as an important virtue. In his letter to the Corinthians, for example, St. Paul specifically lists "faith, hope, and charity" as Christian virtues. Faith may be even more central to Islam. The very word "Islam" is derived from an Arabic word that means submission, and the first of the Five Pillars of Islam is to acknowledge that there is only one God. Other religions place more or less emphasis on faith as well.

But is faith a virtue? Is someone who believes something on the basis of faith acting in a praiseworthy manner? A consideration of the *consequences* of faith shows that it is actually *not* a virtue. People should not believe things on faith. In fact, faith can be very dangerous.

To say that you believe something on the basis of faith is to say that although you do not have good *evidence*, you believe anyway. For example, many people decide to believe that an omnipotent, loving God created the universe. They

have no evidence for the belief. They admit that all the "proofs" and disputes through the ages are inconclusive. The few facts we do understand can be explained by scientists using natural laws. So there is no evidence that God exists. But they decide to believe in God on the basis of faith, not on the basis of evidence.

What is evidence? To say that there is *evidence* for some belief is to say that some established facts make the belief *more probable*. For example, a prosecutor in a trial presents evidence that the defendant is guilty. The evidence might be bloodstains at the scene of the crime, which are the same blood-type as the defendant's. The two facts—blood stains and matching blood-type—make it more probable that the defendant is guilty. They aren't proof, but they are evidence of guilt. If nine out of ten patients who take a drug are cured, and all the patients who did not take the drug remain ill, those facts make it probable that similar patients who take the drug in the future will be cured. This is evidence, not faith.

Another example of faith is belief in immortality. There is no good evidence that people continue to exist after they die. The alleged "voices from beyond the grave" and other ghost stories all turn out to be hoaxes perpetrated by swindlers on desperate widows and grieving relatives. At least the cheated widows are looking for evidence, however bogus it is. But some people say they believe they will go to heaven after they die, even though there is no evidence that heaven exists. They say they do not need evidence. They simply have faith that they will never really die.

The desperate widow believes that her dead husband still exists somewhere. Why does she believe it? She has faith, people say. But that just means she decides to believe, even though she has no real evidence. *Why* does she have faith? Why do people have faith that God exists? It is a personal decision, people say. But why do they make that personal decision? The facts and objective evidence do not persuade them to believe. If they did, it would not be faith but a rational inference about probability. So why do people have faith?

There are two possible answers. One is that some *authority* tells them to have faith. For example, parents tell their children (directly or indirectly) that they should believe in God. They cannot point to convincing evidence that God exists, but they still say he does, and they expect their children to believe, too. After the children grow up, they never question what they have been told. Priests and rabbis are also looked up to as authorities. They tell people to have faith, and since people trust them, they do what the religious authorities say.

Besides authority, the other reason people have faith is comfort. The belief makes them feel better. This is obviously why the desperate widow believes her dead husband still exists. Believing that he is out there somewhere, listening or watching, makes her loss easier to bear. The same motive explains why many people believe that *they* will be immortal. The prospect of their own death is so terrifying and painful that they can't face it. So they decide to believe that they will never die. They have faith.

Both these ways of thinking decide to believe something even though there is no evidence or authorities, they will never learn something because an authority avoid all responsibility. In conclusion, on some question, weigh the reasonable decision. And yet throughout long run, people will be happy whole will be better if it is made obedient sheep.

Furthermore, if people soon submit in matters of politics, ships, and other areas of life in matters of religion will prefer of foreign policy, or government grading. And such tremendous very dangerous, because potential ties in matters of belief, then well. Beliefs are the basis of a minister says you should, then should donate more money in religion, or report on any irregularly thousands of followers have allowed him to choose strangers. He also decides what submitting to authorities is a bad began with that seemingly irregular

The consequences of this other kind of faith are perhaps they are more dangerous. The believe something because the God on the basis of faith, then It is only natural. If the method the same method in other areas

But consider the consequences are intellectually and emotionally of men's and women's abilities conclusion; other studies see no hard evidence one way or that men are superior. Why? feel better about myself. This God on the basis of faith. It must be true. But the consequences to sexism. Believing that merely



Both these ways of thinking lead to terrible consequences. The first way is to decide to believe something (to have faith) because an authority says it is true, even though there is no evidence to support the belief. But if people follow authorities, they will never learn to think for themselves. It is very easy to believe something because an authority says we should. We just submit, sheeplike, and avoid all responsibility. In contrast, it is very difficult to search out all the facts on some question, weigh the evidence for and against, and then make a reasonable decision. And yet the difficult path is better than the easy one. In the long run, people will be happier if they think for themselves, and society as a whole will be better if it is made up of reasonable, inquiring citizens rather than obedient sheep.

Furthermore, if people submit to authorities in matters of religion, they will soon submit in matters of politics, social policy, education, personal relationships, and other areas of life. People who habitually accept their priest's word in matters of religion will probably accept their Congressman's word in matters of foreign policy, or government expenditures. Such slavish obedience is degrading. And such tremendous power over people on the part of authorities is very dangerous, because power corrupts. In addition, if people follow authorities in matters of belief, then they will soon follow them in matters of action as well. Beliefs are the basis of action. If you decide to believe in God because your minister says you should, then what will you do when your minister says you should donate more money to the church, or convert your neighbor to the true religion, or report on any irregularities you see among your neighbors? (Literally thousands of followers of Sun Myung Moon, who lives near New York, have allowed him to choose their own spouses for them, usually complete strangers. He also decides when they should consummate the marriage.) Submitting to authorities is a bad way of thinking. Many of the horrors of history began with that seemingly innocent decision.

The consequences of this kind of faith are clear. The consequences of the other kind of faith are perhaps more difficult to see, but for that very reason they are more dangerous. The other kind of faith was when people decide to believe something because the belief makes them feel better. If people believe in God on the basis of faith, then they will believe other things on the basis of faith. It is only natural. If the method of thinking works in one area, people will use the same method in other areas, particularly when the method is comforting.

But consider the consequences. I would feel better if it were a fact that men are intellectually and emotionally superior to women. The *evidence* on the issue of men's and women's abilities is confusing. Some studies seem to support one conclusion; other studies seem to support the opposite conclusion. So there is no hard evidence one way or the other. Therefore, I will simply *choose* to believe that men are superior. Why? Because it is a very comforting belief. It makes me feel better about myself. This is the way of thinking of people who believe in God on the basis of faith. That idea makes them feel better, so they decide it must be true. But the consequences of this way of thinking are terrible. It leads to sexism. Believing that men are better than women just because it makes me

feel better is blatant sexism. Of course it could just as easily lead to racism, superpatriotism, and other forms of chauvinism.

Other consequences of this kind of faith are just as bad. It is very difficult for people to accept responsibility for their actions, especially when they fail or make a mistake or do something wrong. Guilt, shame, and embarrassment are painful feelings, and everyone wants to avoid them. How easy it is to simply deny the charges. "I didn't want to do it. The system made me do it!" "I was out of my mind. I didn't know what I was doing." "The pressure from work was so intense that I had no choice but to lie." "Hey, she had it coming to her anyway." How easy it is to believe in one's own innocence, when the belief is so comforting and soothing to the conscience. The evidence may be inconclusive. It is very difficult to know why someone did something, even oneself. It is often difficult to know for sure what was right and what was wrong.

But the belief in one's innocence is sometimes a sham and a lie. Having faith because it makes one feel better is a bad way of thinking. Denying responsibility is not only false in many cases, but it also creates bad feelings among others, it sets a bad example, and it makes it easier to do even worse things in the future. If more and more people think this way, then in the long run, it will undermine society.

It comes from the practice of believing something because the belief makes one feel better. Beliefs should be based on evidence, not comfort. Our beliefs are supposed to be about the world as it really is. That is what beliefs are. Therefore, we must make every effort to find out exactly what the world is like. We do that by observing, analyzing, experimenting, and collecting information, not by obeying authorities, massaging our own egos, or letting our fantasies run wild. The consequences of basing any beliefs on faith<sup>^</sup>would be disastrous.

**Key Concepts**

faith	authority	consequences
evidence	comfort	chauvinism

**Critical Questions**

1. How does the essay define "faith"? How does it define "evidence"? Can you make up an example of each?
2. Why do people have faith, in the questioner's opinion?
3. What are the consequences of trusting authorities, according to the essay?
4. Do you think accepting the authority of one's religion really would lead to the results described? Don't we all accept and believe scientific authorities?
5. How would faith lead to sexism and racism, according to the questioner?
6. Where exactly do the questioner and the believer disagree? Does a questioner think we can understand the things a believer says we cannot understand?

**Methods and Techniques  
CONSEQUENCES**

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