

Response paper
mccloskey article
(278.205 kb) essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Response Paper McCloskey Article (278. 205 Kb) Having completed the unit of philosophy of religion, you are now ready to respond to an article written by an actual atheist. This article, titled “ On Being an Atheist,” was written by H. J.

McCloskey in 1968 for the journal Question. McCloskey is an Australian philosopher who wrote a number of atheistic works in the 1960s and 70s including the book God and Evil (Nijhoff, 1974). In this article, McCloskey is both critical of the classical arguments for God’s existence and offers the problem of evil as a reason why one should not believe in God. Your assignment is to read his short article, attached above, and respond to each of the questions below. The basis for your answers should primarily come from the resources provided in the lessons covering the philosophy of religion unit of the course (Evans, Craig, and the PointeCast presentation).

You are not merely to quote these sources as an answer to the question – answer in your own words. You are also encouraged to appeal to other outside sources as well, as long as you properly document them. This Response Paper is to be a minimum of 1500 words (equivalent to six pages) and should be written as a single essay and not just a list of answers to questions. You may be critical of McCloskey, but should remain respectful. Your instructor is looking for a detailed response to each of the questions below. Specifically, you should address the following: ·1.

McCloskey refers to the arguments as “ proofs” and often implies that they can’t definitively establish the case for God, so therefore they should be abandoned. What would you say about this in light of my comments on the

approaches to the arguments in the PointeCast presentation (Lesson 18)?

—The place that proofs play in coming to believe in God According to McCloskey, proofs do not necessarily play a vital role in the belief of God. Page 62 of the article states that “ most theists do not come to believe in God as a basis for religious belief, but come to religion as a result of other reasons and factors. ” However, he feels that as far as proofs serve theists, the three most commonly accepted are the cosmological, the teleological, and the argument from design. It is important to note that he considers these arguments as reasons to “ move ordinary theists to their theism. ” (p.

63) This is not necessary the case and contradicts the former statement that most theists do not hold to these proofs. As such, the attempt to dispute these arguments as a reason not to believe in God is almost not worth attempting. If theists do not generally hold to these proofs as reasons for faith, then why bother trying to dispute them to theists? Continuing to do so seems as though he is motivated to prove a point few are not interested in disputing, and thus is purposely trying to set up theist belief as ridiculous; in other words, he is looking to pick a fight. This is not an intellectual objective article. Bias necessarily forfeits intellectual objectivity. · 2.

On the Cosmological Argument: oMcCloskey claims that the “ mere existence of the world constitutes no reason for believing in such a being [i. e. a necessarily existing being]. ” Using Evans’ discussion of the non-temporal form of the argument (pp. 9-77) explain why the cause of the universe must be necessary (and therefore uncaused). oMcCloskey also claims that the cosmological argument “ does not entitle us to postulate an all-powerful, all-perfect, uncaused cause.

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“ In light of Evans’s final paragraph on the cosmological argument (p. 77), how might you respond to McCloskey?

-----2. McCloskey’s criticisms of the cosmological argument The cause-effect rationalization understands a relation between things that are in existence, will come into existence, and pass out of existence. If God, or something else (a power, force, whatever) were part of the frame of causation already in motion, then it would belong to that which is caused by something else. The uncaused cause holds to that which is outside the framework of causation. Most philosophers hold that this first cause cannot be caused for the reason that it is outside causation.

Something would need to set forth in motion the ring of causality. If the premise stands, then such a first cause would have to exist necessarily, otherwise it would have been caused. This necessity is one of causal relation, as long as the premise is accepted. As regards the cosmological argument itself, McCloskey states that “ all we entitled to infer is the existence of a cause commensurate with the effect to be explained, the universe, and this does not entitle us to postulate an all-powerful, all-perfect, uncaused cause. ” (p.

63) This is indeed true, there is no reason to necessarily infer a God person, however; the inference is of the nature that suggests (hence the term infer) a cause of such magnitude that it is practically God-like. Moreover, his words do not disprove the rational of a God. Entitlement not to call this cause “ God” is neither entitlement to deny calling this cause or considering this cause to be “ God. ” · ·3.

On the Teleological Argument: oMcCloskey claims that “ to get the proof going, genuine indisputable examples of design and purpose are needed. ” Discuss this standard of “ indisputability” which he calls a “ very conclusive objection. ” Is it reasonable? oFrom your reading in Evans, can you offer an example of design that, while not necessarily “ indisputable”, you believe provides strong evidence of a designer of the universe? oMcCloskey implies that evolution has displaced the need for a designer. Assuming evolution is true, for argument’s sake, how would you respond to McCloskey (see Evans pp.

82-83)? oMcCloskey claims that the presence of imperfection and evil in the world argues against “ the perfection of the divine design or divine purpose in the world. ” Remembering Evans’ comments about the limitations of the cosmological argument, how might you respond to this charge by McCloskey?

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McCloskey’s criticisms of the teleological argument The objections in this section are based on his want for “ indisputable” proofs (p. 4) of design in the same manner as there are supposedly indisputable proofs for evolution.

The primary difficulty of evolution is that it has no proof of the actual existence of first organism development nor the actual pattern of this evolution. The whole theory is based on biological likeness between organisms. The weakness of this argument is many. First, the change from simple forms to such complex forms of diverse species.

Did we all exist as the same simple organism or did many simple organisms exist and evolve? In either case, there is no foundation for understanding where those first life forms came from. At the same time, other things come into play that we do not understand. For example, are we part descendents from Dinosaurs? If they were erased from the earth for whatever reason, did their biological complexities survive into part of us today? What came after them to evolve into the millions of organisms in existence today? The second issue regards the problem of similarity. Evidently, there are biological similarities between organisms, yet is this sufficient to disprove the presence of God? Science affirms what is there - the physical - not what we are.

Despite the similarities, the differences are of greater magnitude. It is difficult to reconcile the enormous leap from animal to man. How can self-understanding and self-realization be explained biologically through evolution? This essential difference is too enormous. The argument from design, or intelligent design as it is also known, is based on the rationale of the known order and movement of the universe. The universe operates according to set laws, continuing to unfold and subsist in a pattern. The chances of such accidental creation to have taken place are grossly phenomenal.

Even mathematically, it is astonishing. For many, this is too much to be coincidental. Part of the problem is, in fact, that it does not necessarily prove a God nor disprove a God, however, neither does it disprove. It does suggest there is another reason, or cause, for which the universe is as it is. Still, the greater the odds, the less likely such things occur of accident.

According to some, the chances of life occurring on this planet, of all planets, in the whole universe, is less than 1 chance in 10¹⁸. (http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/design_evidences/2001_probabilities_for_life_on_earth.shtml). Others, considering the possibility of life on other planets, based on evolution, hold it to be less than 0.

1 per cent over four billion years. (http://www.scientificblogging.com/news_releases/the_mathematical_probability_of_life_on_other_earth_like_planets) Even scientifically, these probabilities are practically null. · ·4.

On the Problem of Evil: oMcCloskey's main objection to theism is the presence of evil in the world and he raises it several times: " No being who was perfect could have created a world in which there was unavoidable suffering or in which his creatures would (and in fact could have been created so as not to) engage in morally evil acts, acts which very often result in injury to innocent persons. The language of this claim seems to imply that it is an example of the logical form of the problem. Given this implication, using Evans's discussion of the logical problem (pp. 159-168, noting especially his concluding paragraphs to this section), how might you respond to McCloskey? McCloskey specifically discusses the free will argument, asking " might not God have very easily so have arranged the world and biased man to virtue that men always freely chose what is right? From what you have already learned about free will earlier in the course, and what Evans says about the free will theodicy, especially the section on Mackie and Plantinga's response (pp.

163-166) and what he says about the evidential problem (pp. 168-172), how would you respond to McCloskey's question?

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===== 4. McCloskey's view of faith Based on the article, McCloskey's view of faith is based on Tillich's definition of faith as " being ultimately concerned, as claiming truth for its concern, and as involving commitment, courage, and the taking of risk. (P. 65) In response, McCloskey holds that this ' risk' is reckless and irrational due to the problematic nature of evil.

The mere existence of evil in the world suggests that an all-perfect being is not perfect, otherwise creation would have no flaws. In effect, he is using the same argument from design and the teleological argument - that from the effects you can determine the cause. So if creation is flawed by these evils, and creation goes back to God, then God is flawed. McCloskey does not continue to prove or disprove any valid reason for accepting or denying God's existence. In effect, he is guilty of begging the question. Is faith in a friend, based upon predetermined knowledge, really faith? The decision to trust a friend is based upon the rational of previous actions and the probability of this friend either repeating the actions or changing the actions.

This is rational probability, not faith. Moreover, If we understood God and all his actions, then there would not be a need for