



What “Proof of God” justifies your position? (part four)

This is part four of a four-part series.

So God isn't omnipotent. He's still the Creator.

When believers say, “God is beyond understanding, beyond definition,” they don't really mean it. At the very least, I would say, there is one characteristic that provides a **very clear** definition of God: “God is the entity that can determine the nature of matter and its interactions in a definable region. God makes universes, at least this one.”

That's why Jews, Christians, and Muslims couldn't possibly accept Zeus, Odin, or Brahma as “God”; none of those can claim they created the universe. This “creation claim” is unique to the Abrahamic religions and central to their beliefs.

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y scientific claim. There are all sorts of things that we may not yet understand, but that are potentially comprehensible to us: the nature of matter, the nature of physical laws, the nature of space and time (a definable region). We consider all these to be scientific; we can work with this.

Other claims of the miracles that God can perform are vague, silly, and somehow lesser than this one. We have biblical stories that God can change water into wine, raise the dead, stop the planet's rotation for a while. These do seem rather "miraculous" (if given any credibility at all). I will claim however that these are nothing more than fancy applications of advanced technology.



Modern medicine raises many people from the dead (myself included) when it brings back someone whose heart has stopped. You might say, "Oh, they're not really dead, they need to be dead longer." That just sounds like an application of more advanced technology. Has all metabolism stopped? Has all DNA degraded? At what point would believers

want to claim God can raise someone from the dead? What if

they have degraded down to their molecular components and been dispersed around the planet? What if they fell into a burning sun or a black hole?

Stopping the revolution of the planet is pretty impressive. One could conceive of the application of massive and powerful energies being applied and some kind of a stasis field to stop the oceans from sloshing around and people from flying off the surface due to the sudden deceleration. Highly advanced technology, to be sure, and we certainly have no idea how to do such a thing at our present stage.

But to say, it is not even achievable technologically **in principle** is to make a prediction about the limitations of the capabilities of future humans or any advanced civilization. Whenever one has made those in the past, they have almost always turned out to be wrong, providing they have any scientific basis whatsoever.

I claim there is only ONE capability that would give someone the "right" to call themselves "God." That is the ability to impose a set of natural laws on real matter (equivalent to "creating a universe"). If you have the ability to create a universe, where the stuff of that universe behaves in a way that you determine, you are "God" (at least to that universe). Anything that constrains the kind of matter you can make or the way that matter interacts, limits your claim to be called "God."

Any other entity, no matter how advanced its technology, that is constrained to operating within the natural properties of the matter in its universe, should not be considered "God." A being that could determine the natural properties of matter would trump any other kind of technology. Only that being could be said to be Supreme.

The main theological claim of the Abrahamic religions is that, despite whatever logical or natural limitations there may be

to God's abilities, He is nonetheless the Creator of the universe (some may say, specifically, of the world and of life, but I think creating the universe encompasses these smaller claims).

Is "being God" the same as having advanced technology?

Let's ask ourselves about "God, the Creator." Does



God understand how He does what He does? Does He understand the process of Creation in a scientific sense, the way we understand how computer chips work? If so, can God teach these scientific principles to another person, teach someone else how to be God?

There are only two possible answers: Yes or No.

No: If God has no idea how to create a universe, we really have to ask how He could lay claim to having done it. How does He know it came into existence by His action? Could He do it again? If we answer, "No," we have to ask whether the "God claim" is substantiated.

Yes: If God understands completely the principles of universe creation, then it would seem to be a science. That is, it's something that is comprehensible by some being (with sufficient intelligence, one would presume). One would expect, like most things that can be understood, that God can subsequently teach "godhood" (i.e. how to create a universe), i.e. that "godhood" is essentially a science.

If it's a science, why can't we discover it on our own? If it's a science, then the "supernatural" (outside of nature) claims for God simply fail. God becomes a subset of "natural." We may honor that, respect that, but why would we worship it?

Now some might argue that God understands how to make universes but no one else can (presumably because we are either not smart enough or lack some ability). But this fails logically.

Everything that is understandable can be taught to someone of sufficient intelligence and ability. Some point to perceptual or physical limitations, saying things like: "You can't teach the colorblind to see color, though they may understand the principle"; or "You can't teach a person without arms to play the guitar." These are silly objections because they are based on essentially technological limitations.

Even we humans are not that far away from using stem cells to restore cone receptors in the eyes of the color blind. Limb regeneration is not an impossibility, as we already know there are creatures on Earth who can regrow severed limbs; we just need to develop the understanding.

Surely, the Creator (who understands how He does what He does) could hypothetically also create a being capable of perceiving and understanding the process of creation. Surely, He would have enough scientific knowledge to be able to pass it down to a sufficiently advanced being. If we can extend our knowledge and abilities, why can't He?

The conclusion is almost inevitable: Any being sufficiently advanced to create a universe should be able to teach the ability to another sufficiently advanced being. Further, the Creator should understand enough biology (or computational theory) to find a way to make capable beings that are currently incapable of understanding creation. We may not know how to do this yet, but it would be the height of hubris to

suggest God can't do it. Being God, "godhood" –if that has any meaning–must be a science that we could potentially understand.

Conclusion

So, we've explored the limitations to any putative "God's" abilities. We've concluded that the God of the Abrahamic faiths is not all-loving, all-knowing, nor all-powerful. Those conclusions are an inevitable result of Scripture, experience, and logic. We've also narrowed our definition of God to His primary defining characteristic or claim: God is the Creator of the universe. But then we've gone on to show how creating a universe is really something that is scientifically achievable, at least in principle. If it's something that has a scientific basis, we humans should eventually be able to figure it out on our own.

Why should we use the possibility that there is some other being who understands more about how the universe works as a justification for our reckless, insane behaviors, for going to war with someone whose views are only moderately different? Especially when we can't really distinguish between this imperfect being we call "God" from some scientifically, technologically very advanced alien being. This seems much more akin to "picking a favorite team" than any rational basis for how we approach the universe.



Is “God” just a “favorite team?” How do people in Boston decide they like the Celtics, the Bruins, or the Red Sox more than they like Toronto’s Raptors, Maple Leafs, or Blue Jays? Well, favorite sports teams are

chosen by where we were born, where we grew up, where we live, who our friends are, and so on. All social factors. It turns out that being born and growing up in a country that primarily practices the Muslim faith is a great predictor that you are more likely to become Muslim than Christian or Jewish. It turns out most of us pick religions much the same way we pick sports teams or political parties.

If God is like a favorite sports team, why would rational people choose that method to determine how they live, who they associate with, who they listen to as authorities? They wouldn’t. Religion is a lot like that; it’s not rational. More dangerously, it’s not a rational way to develop public policy. As I said at the beginning, I don’t really care what you believe in the privacy of your own mind, but when your beliefs affect the public policy that you propose or support, then I care greatly.

I want public policy to be rational, based on the best available evidence and logical analysis. I want public policy to be flexible, to adjust in the face of new data rather than defend its dogmatic and indefensible ideology. That’s the only reason I care about your beliefs, the only reason I challenge those beliefs. When anyone uses their unsubstantiated beliefs to formulate policy in the public domain, I think it’s incumbent on evidence-based, rational people to challenge the

basis of those beliefs.