

Book Review**Review of Antony Flew & Roy A. Varghese's Book: There Is a God:
How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind**

Stephen P. Smith*

ABSTRACT

Antony Flew's "There is a God" deserves a careful read by both believer and non-believer. Flew sews together an evidential tapestry, mostly by pointing to the work of others like Albert Einstein, Paul Davies, Gerald Schroeder, John Barrow, Richard Cameron, David Berlinski, and several others. Overall, I am impressed with Flew's thinking. You can find this book at Amazon http://www.amazon.com/There-God-Notorious-Atheist-Changed/dp/0061335290/ref=cm_cr_mr_title.

Key Words: God, atheist, universe, consciousness.

Flew, the son of a Methodist minister, tells of his upbringing and time at Kingswood School. Flew was an atheist by age 15, and he kept this fact a secret before the time it leaked out by age 23. Flew interacted with C.S. Lewis and met with Ludwig Wittgenstein. Flew the Oxford educated philosopher became an icon of atheistic thinking, as well as a philosopher of many publications. The atheist remained honest with his principles, he followed the argument where it led.

Flew tells that he has changed his mind before, several times. He defected from full compatibilism, and became a supporter of free will. Flew (page 63) writes: "A moving is a movement that can be initiated or quashed at will; a motion is a movement that cannot. The power of moving is an attribute peculiar to people, whereas entities incapable of consciousness or intention can only manifest motion. Agents are creatures who, precisely and only insofar as they are agents, can and cannot but make choices."

Flew (page 75) tells that he stopped being an atheist in 2004, and announced to the world: "What I think the DNA material has done is that it has shown, by almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together. It's the enormous complexity of the number of elements and the enormous subtlety of the ways they work together. The meeting of these two parts at the right time by chance is simply minute. It is all a matter of the enormous complexity by which the results were achieved, which looked to me like the work of intelligence."

Flew (page 80) pokes at Dawkins's selfish genes that were thought to control our human like emotions, and writes: "Although he [Dawkins] later issues occasional disavowals, Dawkins gave no warning in his book [The Selfish Gene] against taking him literally. He added, sensationally, that 'the argument of this book is that we, and all other animals, are machines created by our genes.' If any of this were true, it would be no use to go on."

Flew (page 88) lays his cards on the table: "I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe's intricate laws manifest what

Correspondence: Stephen P. Smith, Ph.D., Visiting Scientist, Physics Department, University Of California at Davis, CA
E-mail: hucklebird@aol.com

scientists have called the Mind of God. I believe that life and reproduction originate in a divine Source."

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Flew (page 115) writes on cosmological fine tuning: "The fine tuning has been explained in two ways. Some scientists have said the fine tuning is evidence for divine design; many others have speculated that our universe is one of multiple others -a 'multiverse'- with the difference that ours happened to have the right conditions for life. Virtually no major scientists today claims that the fine tuning was purely a result of chance factors at work in a single universe."

Flew (page 119) writes: "Three things might be said concerning the arguments about fine tuning. First, it is a hard fact that we live in a universe with certain laws and constants, and life would not have been possible if some of these laws and constants had been different. Second, the fact that the existing laws and constants allow the survival of life does not answer the question of the origin of life. This is a very different question, as I will try to show; these conditions are necessary for life to arise, but not sufficient. Third, the fact that it is logically possible that there are multiple universes with their own laws of nature does not show that such universes do exist. There is currently no evidence in support of a multiverse. It remains a speculative idea."

Flew (page 137) writes: "Modern cosmologists seemed just as disturbed as atheists about the potential theological implications of their work. Consequently, they devised influential escape routes that sought to preserve the nontheist status quo. These routes included the idea of the multiverse, numerous universes generated by endless vacuum fluctuation events, and Stephen Hawking's notion of a self-contained universe."

Regarding life as purpose-driven, Flew (page 125) notes the views of philosopher Richard Cameron: "Something that is alive, says Cameron, will also be teleological-that is, it will possess intrinsic ends, goals, or purposes. 'Contemporary biologists, philosophers of biology, and workers in the field of artificial life,' he writes, 'have yet to produce a satisfying account of what it is to be alive, and I defend the view that Aristotle can help us fill this gap... Aristotle did not hold life and teleology to be coextensive simply by chance, but defined life in teleological terms, holding that teleology is essential to the life of living things.' "

Regarding the connection of mind and life, Flew (page 131-132) quotes physiologists George Wald: "Both questions [having to do with mind and life] might be brought into some degree of congruence. This is with the assumption that mind, rather than emerging as a late outgrowth in the evolution of life, has existed always as the matrix, the source and condition of physical reality -that the stuff of which physical reality is constructed is mind-stuff. It is mind that has composed a physical universe that breeds life, and so eventually evolves creatures that know and create; science-, art-, and technology-making creatures." Flew (page 132) comments: "This, too, is my conclusion. The only satisfactory explanation for the origin of such 'end-directed, self-replicating' life as we see on earth is an infinitely intelligent Mind."

Flew (page 155) writes: "I must say again that the journey to my discovery of the Divine has thus far been a pilgrimage of reason. I have followed the argument where it has led me. And it has led me to accept the existence of a self-existent, immutable, immaterial, omnipotent, and omniscient Being."

Flew's book also comes with two appendices; Appendix A written by Roy Abraham Varghese; and Appendix B written by N.T. Wright. Varghese also wrote the preface, and I understand that at age 84 Flew required Varghese's help as a ghostwriter (or coauthor).

References

Antony Flew & Roy A. Varghese, 2007, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, HarperOne.