Forty Years of Progress in Christian Apologetics:
An A-theist Changes His Mind (April 7, 2021)

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"In order that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,
I say to the paralytic, 'rise, take up your bed and walk'". Mark 2:10, 11

Introduction

The title of this paper is "Forty Years of Progress in Christian Apologetics: An A-Theist Changes His Mind." By Christian Apologetics I mean rational defense of Christian theism. The "a-theist" I have in mind is Anthony Flew. Flew is somewhat unique among a-theists because unlike most who merely dabble in disbelief, Flew invested a lifetime of systematic argument against belief in God and the afterlife. By "progress" I mean that old arguments against Christian theism have been discarded and new arguments for Christian theism put forward.

By focusing on "rational defense" and Flew's arguments, I do not mean to rule out the value or legitimacy of less empirical approaches, to the contrary.[1] However, if you believe that historic Christianity is grounded in substantial events about which truth claims are made, then to that extent you have entered the world of empirical rational defense. Flew took the phrase "God exists" and "there is life after death" as truth claims. To be clear about this he (with John Wisdom) wrote the famous parable of the gardener which we will hear in a moment.

Methodology. This paper is not a rigorous philosophical argument nor a professional historical analysis of twentieth century philosophy or apologetics. Rather, we will look at arguments that brought about Flew's change of mind as he describes them in conversations[2] and in his book "There Is A God."[3] For the arguments that Flew found persuasive we will identify his underlying philosophical changes. For arguments that Flew did not find persuasive we will call attention to work of Christian Apologists who did. Finally, we will identify lines of evidence that need further development for future Flew's, some which Flew himself identifies as promising. Along the way we will identify several members of the Stone-Campbell movement that were instrumental in Flew's journey.[4]

Organization. Flew's belief in God was not an overnight occurrence, but followed a lifetime philosophical reflection and change. In this paper, after examining some philosophical assumptions and the background with which Flew began his career, we trace his development through key dates and topics that he has identified: 1950 falsification, 1976 coherence, 1985 burden of proof, 1998 big bang cosmology and design, 2004 the God of Aristotle, and 2007 the God who acts. Finally, we note that Flew's 2007 God who acts could perform miracles. Although Flew did not adopt

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[1] Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004) 293-327 has an argument from religious experience. For an introduction to cultural apologetics see Paul M. Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

[2] Gary Habermas, "My Pilgrimage from Atheism to Theism: A Discussion between Antony Flew and Gary Habermas" (2004). LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations. 333. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/333.

[3] Antony Flew with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There Is A God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007). Hereinafter cited in the text as (TG) followed by the page number. See also Anthony Horvath, *A Defense of the Integrity of Antony Flew's "There is a God" From His Own Letters* (www.athanatosministries.org, 2013)

[4] Flew mentions Terry Miethe who was a student at Lincoln Christian and ultimately taught at Oxford and Thomas Warren who ultimately taught at Harding. Both influenced Flew through debate and Miethe through personal friendship. There is an autobiographical flavor to this paper because as a graduate student the author was assigned Flew's arguments and was classmate and personal friends with those who later knew and influenced Flew.

revelational theism he set the philosophical stage for defense of it. In a final section we mention some apologists and themes that merit follow up. We conclude that there has indeed been a renaissance in theism and Christian apologetics with a dominance by Christian philosophers that Flew's questioning mind has promoted.

Flew's Philosophical Progress: A Snapshot

The Way Things Were. University students who have in interest in God or religion might sign up for a course in the Philosophy of Religion. Had one done so in England or the U.S. in the 1940's or 1950's a believer in God would have faced a depressing scenario. Such a course would typically have examined the four traditional arguments for God's existence, seen how each failed, and finally concluded that an all good, all powerful God could not exist because of all the evil in the world. God might be all powerful or all good but he could not be both. Such was a common classroom scenario. But things got worse. Some said that language about God had no meaning at all; it wasn't true, it wasn't even false. As a result many universities eliminated courses in the Philosophy of Religion as unworthy of discussion.

The New Flew. Into this 1940's climate a young a-theist named Antony Flew entered Oxford University, excelled in study, became the world's most notorious a-theist, and then shocked the world by announcing in 2004 that he had changed his mind, he now believed in God. To say that his a-theist colleagues were shocked would be an under-statement. What caused this change? Flew published two accounts of his reasons, one a lengthy interview in 2004 and another a full book length treatment in 2007. In the three intervening years between 2004 and 2007 Flew's views came closer to traditional theism, but Flew died in 2010 not having publicly confessed Christ. However, in his 2007 book he published an appendix called "The Self-Revelation of God in Human History: A Dialogue on Jesus with N. T. Wright, showing sympathy with Christianity.

The Chronology of Change. Flew himself mentions an evolution of philosophical hot topics and selects specific dates that mark the change. These dates also represent significant events in Flew's life.
-   In 1950 analytic philosophers discussed what it means to say "God loves you,"
-   in 1976 they asked whether the concept of God is coherent,
-   by 1985 discussion moved to who has the burden of proof, and
-   by 1998 the implications of Big Bang Cosmology was hot (TG 67).
-   In 2004 Flew declared he had changed his mind, God does exist, the God of Aristotle at least.
-   By 2007 his concept of God has evolved, he believes in a God who interacts with creation.

Two Life Principles. Flew adopted the exhortation of Socrates as one of his life principles "follow the argument wherever it leads" (TG 23). He also believed in discussion of disagreements in person when possible.

Flew's Assumptions from Descartes and Hume

Descartes's Certainty. Modern philosophy began with Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and his shift from the ancient priority of metaphysics (what exists) to the modern priority of epistemology (how do I know). Ancient and medieval philosophers like Aristotle and Aquinas were masters of deductive logic that resulted in conclusions that were certain.
> Major Premise: All women are mortal
> Minor Premise: Athena is a woman
> Conclusion: Athena is mortal

The conclusion does follow with certainty from the premises. The fatal flaw as not in the use of deduction which we do and must use, but in the establishment with certainty of the major premise "all women are mortal." The ancients got this certainty using metaphysical objects called essences such as Plato's forms or Aristotle's substances. It is part of the essence of woman-ness to be mortal, so the major premise is certain, it is guaranteed. Although the use of essences led to certainty it also led Aristotle to uncertain certainties such as male babies become human 40 days after conception, but for female babies it is 80 days.

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Descartes changed all of this. He prioritized epistemology and asked first "how do we know anything" and only then can we answer "what do we know?" If there are essences, how do we know them. Descartes "methodical doubt" sent him on the quest for certainty, a quest that led to the jokes of first year philosophy students: if a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it fall… Decartes concluded with certainty that he existed, but his methodical doubt left him imprisoned in his own mind, there was little that he could deduce from this certainty.

Hume's Skepticism. David Hume (1711-1776) accepted the Cartesian priority of epistemology and quest for certainty and drew numerous skeptical results. He challenged cause and effect; for him causality is merely the constant conjunction of effect with cause. He was skeptical about sense experience itself. He argued that the traditional arguments for God's existence (cosmological, teleological, moral) were flawed and could not lead to any certainty. He further argued that miracles could not happen because "a firm and unalterable experience" establishes the laws of nature, making nature inviolable. Not only were miracles impossible for Hume, but even if they were possible, due to their vast improbability historical method could never establish that a miracle happened.

Hume concluded that there are two types of knowledge "matters of fact" and "relations of ideas;" a doctrine we know as "Hume's fork." According to Hume, relations of ideas were certain only because they were true by definition; but matters of fact would never achieve such certainty. To illustrate, two leprechauns plus two leprechauns equals four leprechauns. This is true with certainty whether leprechauns exist or not. Successors to Hume would search for matters of fact that were at the same time certain, generally called the synthetic apriori.[5]

Such was the worldview that grew into the Analytic Philosophy movement at Oxford when Antony Flew arrived in the 1940's. But that is getting ahead of ourselves.

Flew's Background

Christian Family Origins. Flew was born into a Christian family that was devout and well-educated. His father, Robert, was a minister in the Wesleyan Methodist church, a tutor in New Testament studies at the Methodist theological college in Cambridge. He ultimately became the first non-Anglican to receive a Ph.D. in Theology from Cambridge University. Antony himself was no stranger to the intellectual life, by the time he reached his fifteenth birthday he had rejected that the universe was created by an all-good, all-powerful God for reasons he would later describe as inadequate. He did not tell his parents; they did not learn until he was nearly 23 and a university student (TG 15-16).

University. In 1942, amidst war, Flew entered Oxford University. As was common for wartime dons, he spent time in the military; for him this was at Bletchley Park in the Royal Airforce as a Japanese translator. In 1947 he took a "first" in his undergraduate examinations and enrolled as a postgraduate student in philosophy under the supervision of Gilbert Ryle. After one year of reading for the higher degree in philosophy he won the John Locke Scholarship in Mental Philosophy and taught at Oxford. During that year the teachings of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein came to Oxford and influenced Ryle.

The Oxford Philosophy. Flew represents the Oxford Philosophy of the 1940's and 50's, in the Analytic tradition of Wittgenstein. It is clearly a modernist tradition that believes in the justification of truth claims. Flew's supervisor, Gilbert Ryle was the interpreter of Wittgenstein to the rest of the world. The Oxford philosophers were "magicians" who believed that the application of rigorous analysis to a problem will often uncover its muddle and make the

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[5] Alvin Plantinga, The Nature of Necessity (Oxford: The Clarendon Press ,1974) p. 6-7 says "Finally, the distinction between the necessary and the contingent must not be confused with the alleged cleavage between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*. The latter distinction, indeed, is shrouded in obscurity." He continues: "Furthermore, the relation between what is known *a prior* and what is necessarily true is by no means simple and straightforward." These are tantalizing statements by one who goes on to defend an ontological argument for the existence of God; that alone might make one suspicious. See pp. 196-221.

problem disappear. In 1921 Wittgenstein invented the "truth table," built into the logic circuits of modern computers. The next time you pick up your iPhone or check your digital watch thank Wittgenstein. Analytic philosophers were known to translate problems from ordinary language into symbolic logical notation that exposed any slight of hand.

Oxford Socratic Club. It was in this context that Flew read his one and only paper to the Oxford Socratic Club, a paper called "Theology and Falsification." The club was started in 1942 by some students with faculty member C.S. Lewis as its President. Flew describes the Socratic club as "… the center of what intellectual life there was in wartime Oxford. The club was a lively forum for debates between atheists and Christians, and I was a regular participant at its meetings." (TG 22-23). The paper was a challenge to show that language about God was anchored to reality in such a way that might be falsified. It generated significant debate and has been reproduced in anthologies of philosophical papers for generations. It began with the parable of the gardener which Flew borrowed from philosopher John Wisdom.

1950 Falsification Challenge: Parable of the Gardener

Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, "Some gardener must tend this plot." The other disagrees, "There is no gardener." So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. "But perhaps he is an invisible gardener." So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H. G. Well's *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. "But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves." At last the Skeptic despairs, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?"[6]

Flew says that his main objective in the paper was "… to clarify the nature of claims made by religious believers. I asked: Do the numerous qualifications surrounding theological utterances result in their dying the death by a thousand qualifications (TG 43)?" On his view a putative assertion that denies nothing is not really an assertion.[7]

Reflections on the Parable. Several comments on the parable are in order. First, most would agree that the claims about a gardener in the parable did suffer death by a thousand qualifications. Second, in spite of appearances, Flew does not think he is presenting falsification as a theory of *meaning* but is focusing on *truth*. Flew does not think he is restating the old verification theory of meaning proposed by A. J. Ayer and other Logical Positivist philosophers. According to Ayer any statement (sentence) that cannot be translated into a statement (sentence) subject to empirical verification has no meaning. We already mentioned that according to this principle, language about God is not true, it is not even false, it has no meaning.[8] Third, Flew thinks that his paper definitively refutes Ayer's verification theory presumably because Ayer's theory of meaning cannot be falsified (TG xiv, xv) and Ayer did ultimately reject his own theory of meaning.[9] Fourth, some do argue that Flew's paper is a restatement of Ayer's

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[6] Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* hereafter cited as *Falsification.* See also Flew and Hare (1971 "Theology and Falsification: A Symposium Part 1.

[7] Flew, ibid, p. 98 "… and to know the meaning of the negative of an accretion is as near as makes no matter, to know the meaning of that assertion.5 And if there is nothing which a putative assertion denies then there is nothing which it asserts either: and so it is not really an assertion."

[8] A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1946).

[9] A. J. Ayer, "The Existence of the Soul," in *Great Thinkers on Great Questions*, ed. Roy Abraham Varghese (Oxford: One World, 1998) 49. As quoted in Flew (TG xiv-xv).

Positivist's theory of meaning, Flew's disclaimer not withstanding.[10] Finally, and most importantly, Flew's challenge to theists to provide evidence for God was accepted and generations of theists did respond.

Responses to Flew's parable would come on multiple fronts, he summarizes some of the less significant ones in his book (TG 45-48). But he also acknowledged later that Christian's did identify arguments that if successful would falsify the claim that God exists, primarily the problem of evil. Christian theists for generations have said that the problem of an all-powerful God who permits evil would be a falsifier if not given a satisfactory answer. But the case for theism must be more comprehensive than an explanation of evil. In response to Flew's challenge, Christian theists especially would build their case on several fronts: by producing theories of meaning that made sense of God language, by producing a coherent statement of God's attributes, and by reinvigorating traditional arguments for God with science-based premises.

Meaning According to C. S. Lewis. Regarding God language, as early as 1939 C. S. Lewis, whom Flew calls the "greatest Christian apologist of the last century (TG 4), had argued in response to the Logical Positivist's verification principle of meaning that all language is metaphorical. One does not need to translate language about God into empirical statements in order for it to have meaning. To make his point, Lewis convincingly traced words originally grounded in sense experience through an evolutionary life cycle that ends in their metaphorical use. Although Lewis makes up words (bluspels and flalansferes) one can think of simple metaphorical examples such as applying the word "color" to sound. Lewis's point is that metaphors can be used to convey meaning that can then be evaluated for truth.[11]

The Theory of Analogy. Another theory of meaning that supports God language is the theory of analogy. According to this theory we understand that "God is love" or "God responds" by analogy with human love experiences. Language about God who is a Spirit gets its meaning by analogy with language about human persons. Oxford philosopher Richard Swinburne has an extended summary of this theory.[12] Although Flew acknowledges the analogical use of God language in some cases (TG 50) he argues that talk about God using personal characteristics (God loves, God wills, etc) fails. It fails because "persons" as we know them always have bodies. Therefore it makes no sense to talk about a person (God) who is a spirit, has no body and is located everywhere. To Flew such talk is incoherent. Therefore, analogies between God and human persons fail (TG 72). As we shall see, Flew changed his mind by 2007 and permitted talk of an all-present spirit who is a person, it is not until then that he fully resolved the question of language about God.

Around 1976 the discussion shifts from the meaning of God language to the coherence of attributes we ascribe to God (coherence of theism) and beyond that in 1998 to science-based arguments for God.[13] [14]

1976 The Coherence of Theism

Flew identifies several elements of Christian theology that he considers incoherent: how could a loving God who is all-powerful permit evil and how can an incorporeal being be called a person. The first has been called the problem of evil, the second is part of the problem of other minds.

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[10] J. P Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, second edition (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017) 142.

[11] C. S. Lewis, "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare (frst published in *Rehabilitations and Other Essays*, 1939; later reprinted in *Selected Literary Essays*, 1969).

[12] Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 59-91 gives an account of the analogical use of language.

[13] It is important to distinguish the question of evidence from the question of how to use language to convey that evidence. Modern emphasis on meaning-as-reference vs the postmodern emphasis on indeterminacy of meaning. See Kevin Vanhoozer, Is There Meaning in this Text? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 17.

[14] Related to the theory of analogy of meaning are the whole array of arguments based on analogy; both are inductive in nature and as such, both are fallible and defeasible. They are not deductive.

The Problem of Evil. Flew contended that the existence of evil in the world made by an all-powerful and all-good God is incoherent—either God is not all-good or he is not all-powerful. As early as 1940 C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* had proposed a solution called the free will defense.[15] According to this defense, God, in order to create creatures that are truly free, allowed them to rebel and it was they who introduced evil into the world. A corollary to this defense is that only through suffering can human character be enriched; a world with no suffering would not permit this moral development and therefore be inferior.

In 1976 Alvin Plantinga fine-tuned the free-will defense in his book *God, Freedom, and Evil*[16], but as late as 1993 still considered the problem of evil "deeply baffling" and his number one troubling issue with respect to belief in God. Consequently he sketches a counter argument to the naturalist. How could there be any such thing as horrifying wickedness if naturalism is true? There can be horrifying wickedness only if there is a way creatures are supposed to live, obliged to live. But naturalism provides no such normativity. The inability to acknowledge the moral evils of a Hitler is a greater problem for naturalism than is the explanation of evil for the Christian.[17] [18] Flew had shifted the discussion from theism needs falsification statements to theism is incoherent. Responses to the problem of evil could solve both.

Free Will. There is a second potential incoherence of theism, that is how creatures can have free will in a determined universe. If we live in a universe where events are determined like the path of billiard balls when hit how can humans have true freedom? Although a-theist also face this issue, Flew seemed to see a special problem for believers in God. If God is indeed the cause of everything, then he is responsible for evil, but if creatures have true freedom, would not their actions catch God by surprise? In that case God would not be all-knowing—another incoherence in theism.

As an a-theist Flew had accepted the time-honored compatibilist solution that since God is not bound by time he could know future choices of free creatures. But in the 1998 debate with William Lane Craig, Flew says he was introduced to a Christian theology that rejected traditional predestinarian ideas and that permitted libertarian free will; consequently he would later reject compatibilism (TG 73) but he does not say what about Craig's view of God he adopted to do so. Whether rightly or wrongly, Flew connected his insights into free will with his family heritage of Wesleyan theology (TG 58-64).

Although Flew was exposed to several varieties of the free will defense over his career, as late as 2004 he still contended that Christian theology had a unique problem of evil (FH 203), the problem of natural evil. The free will defense might explain moral evil introduced by the choices of rebellious sons of Adam and daughters of Eve as Lewis put it, but for Flew, natural evils such as tornados and plagues were still a problem. But the free will defense *does* offer an explanation of natural evils. As the Biblical book of Job proposes, natural evils are explained by the actions of free creatures, albeit incorporeal free agents, the rebellious angels. But Flew would have none of the concept of person without a body. It wasn't that he considered naked spirits pornographic but a more serious intellectual crime of incoherence. So these non-beings could not be the solution to natural evil.

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[15] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1940).

[16] Alvin Plantinga, *God Freedom and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974).
He proposed the free will defense as early as 1965 in the anthology by Max Black. See summary in God, Freedom, and Evil, 1974, p. 49.

[17] Alvin Plantinga, "A Christian Life Partly Lived" *Philosophers Who Believe*, edited by Kelly James Clark (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1993) 72-73. "It is hard enough, from a naturalistic perspective to see how it could be that we human beings can be so related to propositions (contents) that we believe them; and harder yet, as I said above, to explain how that content could enter into a causal explanation of someone's actions. But these difficulties are as nothing compared with seeing how, in a naturalistic universe, there could be such a thing a genuine appalling wickedness."

[18] For a helpful summary of Alvin Plantinga's thought see Nicholas Wolterstorff "Then, Now, and Al" *Faith and Philosophy*, Volume 28, Number 3, July 2011, pp. 253-68.

The Problem of God as Bodiless Person. A second problem of incoherence in Christian theism for Flew is the representation of God as a person who is incorporeal. This concept of God is incoherent for Flew because for him, the concept of person implies a body. Further there is a problem of how to identify and re-identify the God we mean to discuss (TG 50). Regarding the problem of a bodyless person, Flew mentions the obvious response of Richard Swinburne in his *Coherence of Theism*, the fact that we have not experienced a person without a body does not mean it is incoherent to suppose that there is one (TG 51). The difficulty of a bodyless person was evidently core to Flew, it was key to his long-term disbelief in the afterlife. In the background was also the question, would he need to adopt a Cartesian dualism of body and soul to enlarge his concept of God?

At some time between 2004 when he adopted his Aristotelian Deist God and the publication of his 2007 book, Flew accepted a personal God based on arguments by Thomas Tracy[19] and Brian Leftow[20] (TG 149). Flew does not go into detail about how he solved the problem of how to identify and re-identify an incorporeal omnipresent Spirit. However, there is a rich tradition of philosophers who argue the analogical position to other minds. Alvin Plantinga in his 1967 book, *God and Other Minds*, quotes a host of thinkers from John Locke to Bertrand Russell who propose this argument. We reason to the existence of other minds based on premises about our own mental life. Plantinga extends the analogical argument to the existence of God.[21] "If my belief in other minds is rational so is my belief in God. But obviously the former is rational, so, therefore is the latter." We do not have an account of what persuaded Flew, but the solution lies in Tracy and Leftow's use of action theory and the concept of intentionality according to which intentionality is an identifying characteristic of persons. We will return to this question.

In *There is a God (2007) Flew* glosses over other proposed coherence problems with theism that were hot around 1976, particularly the attribute of immutability which in 2004 he adopts for his Aristotelian God. Perhaps this is because his 2004 God does not interact with creation and therefore immutability is not a problem. However, by the time when Flew accepted the personal incorporeal God of action in 2007 (TG 149) this coherence problem would have come up.

Of the coherence problems that did trouble Flew, solutions were proposed at the time of the discussion, particularly to the problem of evil and the use of metaphor and analogy to describe God as well as Plantinga's personal intentional Other Mind. However, is was not until much later due to the work of Swinburne, Tracy, and Leftow that Flew accepted the coherence of a bodiless person and that identity and re-identity of such a person (God) could be evidenced through the intentional actions.

Prior to1985 and the next item on Flew's list of topics there were several important developments: the development of a cosmological argument based on the Big Bang by William Lane Craig in 1977, the formation of the Society of Christian Philosophers in 1978, and the publication of Craig's Kalam Cosmological Argument in 1979 in the very visible Library of Philosophy and Religion edited by John Hick.[22] These all signaled a resurgence of theism.

1985 Burden of Proof

In his book of essays titled *The Presumption of Atheism*, Flew had defended the idea that in a debate, the side making the affirmation has the burden of proof. For Flew, that meant that theists and Christians who affirm that God exists have the burden of proof. This prompted the debate in Dallas in 1985. Flew was one of four a-theists who debated

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[19] Thomas Tracy, *God Action and Embodiment* ( ). See also "Divine Action, Created Causes, and Human Freedom," *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*, edited by Thomas Tracy (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1994).

[20] Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[21] Alvin Plantinga, God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) 191n4, 271.

[22] William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*, Library of Philosophy and Religion, General Editor: John Hick (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd, 1979).

four Christian theists (Alvin Plantinga, William Alston, George Mavrodes, Ralph McInerny) over the burden of proof. Flew describes the debate as having "no fireworks, because neither group was willing to engage the other (TG 69)."

Outcomes of the Debate. Although Flew describes this discussion as a stalemate with little impact on his metamorphosis, there are several important features and outcomes of this debate. First, this was an event, an organized attempt to get non-theists to engage with the arguments of theists. Second, Christian theists were talking with each other and strategizing in response to a-theists. It was no accident that all four of the theists who responded were active in the newly formed Society of Christian Philosophers. Third, it was here that Alvin Plantinga asked about the justification of foundational beliefs and why belief in God could not be a properly basic belief like perception, memory, or belief in other minds (TG 55). If there is any weight to Plantinga's argument, then half of the issue is solved, theism is not an assertion. Fourth, Flew seems to conflate atheism (the assertion that God does not exist) with agnosticism (the suspension of judgment). If atheism is an assertion even though agnosticism is not, and theism is not an assertion because belief in God is properly basic as Plantinga proposes, then it follows that the burden of proof does lie on the a-theist.[23] Fifth, Flew met two evangelical Christian philosophers, Terry Miethe and Gary Habermas, with both of whom he would carry on extended correspondence, later debate, and describe as "good friends" (TG 70).

The Big Three Questions. In the end Flew would see little value in burden of proof style arguments, but would be persuaded by three science-based arguments: "the laws of nature, life with its teleological organization, and the existence of the universe." (TG 155). He elaborates the three as follows: "The first is the question that has puzzled and continues to puzzle most reflective scientists: How did the laws of nature come to be? The second is evident to all: How did life as a phenomenon originate from nonlife? And the third is the problem that philosophers handed over to the cosmologists: How did the universe, by which we mean all that is physical, come into existence? (TG 91)." Let us take up the last of Flew's three topics first: the argument from the existence of the universe.

1998 Cosmological Argument: Big Bang, Existential Causality, Infinite Regress

Flew speaks of the "renaissance" of philosophy of religion in the 1980's and 1990's (TG 149) partly brought on by the scientific "consensus" (TG 135) in Big Bang cosmology. If the universe had a beginning 14.5 billion years ago, what caused it and why is there something rather than nothing?

Leibniz and Sufficient Reason. Flew had a fascination with the cosmological argument for God's existence in spite of flaws that had been demonstrated by Hume and Kant. Historically there are three forms of the argument (kalam, Thomist, and Leibnizian), of these three, Flew favored that of Leibniz couched in the language of possible worlds. But Leibniz based his argument on a principle that Flew questioned, the principle of sufficient reason. According to this principle everything must have a sufficient reason, so the universe must have a sufficient reason for its existence.

The Big Bang and Existential Causality. What brought about a cosmological change of mind in this veteran a-theist, Flew? There are at least three ideas that Flew mentions. First, Big Bang cosmology with its conclusion that the universe had a beginning allowed a reformulation of the cosmological argument based on actual causes (existential causality) rather than Leibnizian sufficient reason. He credits Terry Miethe for pressing existential causality in their 1991 debate (TG 70-71). He also mentions the 1998 debate with William Lane Craig (TG 72) whose 1979 book using existential causality and the Big Bang had "scooped" philosophical news.[24]

Rejection of Hume's Skepticism. A second and third change of ideas for Flew were that he reexamined and rejected Hume's skeptical arguments. Hume had questioned the very idea of cause and effect and the reality of the external world. Flew discovered that Hume was inconsistent and made important use of the very ideas that he criticized. As

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[23] Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, p. 143.
[24] Craig, *Kalam*.

Flew put it, "Hume's skepticism about cause and effect and his agnosticism about the external world are jettisoned the moment he leaves his study." (TG 58, 139-141).

Infinite Regress Refuted. One response to the cosmological argument is that there is an infinite regress of first causes for the universe. Flew spends little time responding to the infinite regress argument, but it is worth noting that as early as the 1970's arguments from set theory proposed that Cantor's mathematical infinites were not identical to actual infinites. By decomposing both actual and mathematical infinities into set theory it was argued that the two are not equivalent.[25]

Alternatives to Big Bang. What about alternatives to Big Bang cosmology? In 1979 William Lane Craig had chronicled early steps by which scientists had attempted to avoid the theological implications of the Big Bang: Hoyle's Steady State theory and the oscillating model.[26] But these alternatives were rejected by the evidence. Flew responds to two more recent "escape routes" by which the non-theist hopes to maintain their a-theist status quo: the multiverse and Hawking's self-contained universe. Flew calls the proposal of multiple universes a "… truly desperate alternative. If the existence of one universe requires an explanation, multiple universes require a much bigger explanation… (TG 137).[27] Of Stephen Hawking's notion of a self-contained universe Flew says that the revelation of a universe in flux made a difference to the discussion, but ultimately the issues at stake were philosophical rather than scientific (TG 138). Thus, he does not think that Hawking's self-contained universe negates the philosophical question, why is there something rather than nothing, and what caused the universe. For Flew, the universe still needs an explanation.

Science or Philosophy. Of the distinction between science and philosophy Flew says: "Are we engaging in science or philosophy here? When you study the interaction of two physical bodies, for instance, two subdatomic particles, you are engaging in science. When you ask how is it that those subatomic particles—or anything physical—could exist and why, you are engaged in philosophy. When you draw philosophical conclusions from scientific data, then you are thinking as a philosopher." (TG 89)

Flew does not accept the cosmological argument in 1998, that would come in 2004, but one can see several philosophical questions percolating in the background: philosophical realism and inductive logic. Both of these Flew thought were necessary for science and both of them would be needed for his reasoning to God. In 1971 Flew argued in his *An Introduction to Western Philosophy* that philosophical idealism is fatal to science. Realism is needed to conclude there are actual entities causing my perceptions. The experience of perceiving a hammer and a nail must have been caused by an actual hammer and nail (TG 37). Similarly, any reasoning from experience to a first cause would need philosophical realism to conclude an actual first cause such as God.

Regarding inductive logic, in 1966 Flew's rejection of theistic arguments is based on their deductive failure. (note Swinburne, Existence of God, p. 12n10.). Yet in 2007 he quotes Swinburne's "C-inductive argument" for God approvingly (TG 145). There has been a shift in Flew's willingness to accept inductive argument with its less than certain and fallible conclusions in reasoning about God. Flew credits David Conway's book, *The Recovery of Wisdom*, above all for his final adoption of the God of Aristotle in 2004 (TG 92-93).[28] But we would not expect to find an elaboration of inductive logic in a work rooted in classical Greek philosophy. Nor would we expect to find a healthy

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[25] Craig, *Kalam*, pp. 66-102. J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987) pp. 22-33. Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, pp. 481-87. However, Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 138n10 argues Moreland and Craig's defense of the Kalam argument fails. It is difficult to see why Swinburne's arguments do not fail for the same reasons as Zeno's paradox.

[26] Craig, *Kalam*, pp. 118-30.

[27] Others have discussed the multiverse argument. See William Lane Craig "Is There Scientific Evidence for the Multiverse?" Reasonable Faith https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ahYslcG8Zw. See also Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 185-87.

[28] David Conway, *The Recovery of Wisdom: From Here to Antiquity in Quest of Sophia* (London: MacMillan, 2000).

dose of inductive logic in the work of John Leslie who influenced Flew, but also defended the pantheism of Spinoza.[29] Confirmation theory was a more recent development. It would appear that Flew's positive use of inductive logic was due to Richard Swinburne whose "C-inductive" argument is accepted by Flew. Swinburne published a full volume on confirmation theory involving probability and inductive logic which is the basis of the term "C-inductive."[30]

2004 Teleological Argument: Design and the Laws of Nature

We have just discussed the third of three arguments for God's existence that Flew finds persuasive—the cosmological argument based on the Big Bang. We will now look at the other two: one based on the precise tuning of the laws of nature and the other on the complexity of life, especially DNA. Both of these arguments to intelligent design are versions of the traditional teleological argument, sometimes called the watchmaker argument. English clergyman William Paley (1743-1805) had popularized this argument by supposing that we found a watch on the beach. Due to its intricate mechanics would we not suspect that there was a watchmaker; and similarly given the intricacies we find in nature, would we not conclude that there is a divine Watchmaker who created the universe?

Paley on Steroids. Paley's argument was blunted by Darwin's theory of evolution and a "watch" (the universe) that was living and changing. Does that not offer an alternate explanation of these intricacies, they could have developed gradually? Unlike Paley's inanimate watch, the Darwinist contends that nature is organic and changing; given enough time anything could develop. However, new formulations of the argument to design are less subject to Darwin's proposal. Newton's law of universal gravitation or Boyle's law for gasses and more recently Einstein's formulation of general and special relativity or the seven universal constants all seem more like Paley's inanimate watch than Darwin's teeming zoo. Furthermore, general consensus of Big Bang cosmology has placed a strict time limit on Darwin. The beginning of the universe 14.5 billion years ago seems like a long time but compared to infinity it is but a moment. As we shall see from probability theorists, the information represented by the DNA molecule would require exponentially more time than the Big Bang allots.

Science or Philosophy. When Flew contends that his "departure from atheism was not occasioned by any new phenomena or argument"he is pressing the distinction between science and philosophy. He says: "When you draw philosophical conclusions from scientific data, then you are thinking as a philosopher (TG 89). So it was the reexamination of the philosophical arguments that led Flew to say "… I think the argument to Intelligent Design is enormously stronger than it was when I first met it." (FH 200).

Laws of nature: Albert Einstein. Regarding laws of nature such as Boyle's law for gasses or Newton's first law of motion, Flew says: "The important point is not merely that there are regularities in nature, but that these regularities are mathematically precise, universal, and "tied together." Einstein spoke of them as "reason incarnate." The question we should ask is how nature came packaged in this fashion. This is certainly the question that scientists from Newton to Einstein to Heisenberg have asked—and answered. Their answer was the Mind of God (TG 96)." Contrary to Richard Dawkins who argues that Einstein was an a-theist, Flew quotes Einstein himself that he was neither an a-theist nor a pantheist as reported in a book by Max Jammer, one of Einstein's friends (TG 99). Flew mentions other great scientists such as Max Plank, Werner Heisenberg, Erwin Schroedinger, and Paul Dirac who "saw a connection between the laws of nature and the Mind of God" (TG 103).

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[29] John Leslie, *Infinite Minds* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 194-95. Craig, *Philosophic Foundations*, p. 494 describes Leslie's tidy explanation as one that not only explains a situation but also reveals in doing so that there is something to be explained." Craig goes on the commend the theory of design inference offered by William Dembski, a ten-step chance elimination argument. Says Craig, "Dembski's analysis can be used to formalize with Leslie grasped in an intuitive way."

[30] Richard Swinburne, Epistemic Justification (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001) as summarized in *The Existence of God*, chapters 1 through 4.

Flew rejects the argument by a-theist Richard Dawkins that "God is too complex a solution for explaining the universe and its laws" (TG 111) but does not elaborate. Rather he appeals to elaborations by Oxford philosophers John Foster and Richard Swinburne. Flew says the "method" by which the above scientist and philosopher point to the "Mind of God" is not a "series of arguments or a process of syllogistic reasoning" but rather a vision of reality that "imposes itself on the rational mind" (TG 112). At the end of his book, Flew appeals to a form of argument called "C-inductive" that Richard Swinburne has defined, and applies to his cosmological argument. We shall see later that Flew relies heavily on Swinburne's analysis of confirmation theory and intends something like it in this case as well (TG 145).

The Anthropic Principle: John Leslie. Flew puts forward an additional feature of the laws of nature, distinct from mathematical precision, universality, and connectedness. This feature he calls the "anthropic principle," a widely used term that Flew did not coin. He observes that "the laws of nature seem to have been crafted so as to move the universe toward the emergence and sustenance of life" (TG 114). Here he appeals to the fundamental constants such as the speed of light or the mass of an electron. "It has been calculated that if the value of even one of the fundamental constants … had been to the slightest degree different, then no planet capable of permitting the evolution of life could have formed (TG 115)." He observes that "Virtually no major scientist today claims that the fine tuning was purely a result of chance factors at work in a single universe (TG 115).

As with the earlier point about the laws of nature, Flew does not elaborate the anthropic principle into an argument but relies on the work of other leading anthropic theorists, particularly John Leslie to do so. Leslie is impressed not so much by particular arguments for instances of fine tuning but that (to use Flew's words) "these arguments exist in such profusion TG 115).[31] Flew agrees that the anthropic principle favors belief in God and devises his new parable of the hotel room to convey his support (TG 113).

The Multiverse Discarded. The theory of the multiverse is what some propose as an alternative to the theistic implications of the anthropic principle. According to the multiverse theory all possible universes exist displaying many different laws and properties, it should therefore come as no surprise needing further explanation that one of them should have just the right conditions for life (TG 117). Flew relies on physicist and cosmologist Paul Davies and philosopher Richard Swinburne to refute the multiverse theory, but gets to the heart of the matter himself. "… 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 (TG 119). Flew accepts the anthropic principle and its implications, our world is fine-tuned to support life in such a way as to suggest a Fine-Tuner. But, Flew does stop with the anthropic principle, "the fact that existing laws and constants allow the survival of life does not answer the question of the origin of life (TG 119).

2004 Teleological Argument – Design and the Origin of Life

Vanished Time. As we have seen, William Paley's watchmaker argument was obscured by a living, wiggling Darwinian clock that modifies itself. Given enough time, we are told, anything can happen. A room full of monkeys with typewriters can produce a Shakespearian sonnet. Or more elegantly stated, protobiologists are now able to produce theories consistent with so-far-confirmed scientific evidence that account for the first living matter. To this, Flew responds with a bang and a big one at that: "… the age of the universe gives too little time for these theories of abiogenesis to get the job done (TG 124). Fourteen and a half billion years seems like a long time, but in terms of the probabilities needed it is a drop in the bucket. The information contained in DNA is significantly more than that of Shakespearian sonnet. This complexity "begs for" an Intelligent Designer.

Shakespeare, the Monkey Theorem, and Time. At the 2004 debate in New York, Flew was impressed by the way Israeli scientist Gerald Schroeder drove home the relationship of complexity to the limits of time. Schroeder first appealed to the monkey experiment conducted by the British National Council of Arts. Six monkeys were placed in a cage with

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[31] John Leslie, *Infinite Minds* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004).

a computer. After a month, not a single word was produced. Note that the letter "I" with a space both sides is a word (TG 76).

More impressive was Schroeder's statistical illustration of complexity and time. What is the likelihood of getting the 488 letters of his favorite Shakespearian sonnet in exactly the right order? Eliminating upper and lower case letters that is 26 multiplied by itself 488 times. For you who are mathematically inclined, in base 10 that is 10 to the 690th power, a very large number. But how large is it? To what do we compare? How about to the number of particles (electrons, protons, and neutrons) in the universe? That number is 10 to the 80th power or 1, with 80 zeros after it. The Shakespearian sonnet of 488 upper case characters in the right order required 1 with 690 zeros after it. Schroeder's illustration went on to imagine converting every element in the universe into a computer chip each that generated 488 trials a million times a second. In fourteen and a half billion years it could generate less than 1 to the 90th trials. It would be off by 1 to the 600th power, 1 with 600 zeros after it. Flew concluded that the Monkey Theorem is a "load of rubbish" (TG 74-76). The amount of information contained in a single strand of DNA is many times greater than a 488-character Shakespearian sonnet, well, you get the idea. The complexity of the universe is not explained by chance in the time available.

Possible combinations in a sonnet of 488 Characters	10 to the 690th power	1 with 690 zeros after it
Particles in the Universe	10 to the 80th power	1 with 80 zeros after it
Trials by Schroeder's "universal" computer	10 to the 90th power	1 with 90 zeros after it

Intentionality, reproduction, and encoding. In addition to the problem of complexity, Flew gives three characteristics of life that require philosophical explanation. *First*, Richard Cameron proposes that living matter possesses an "inherent goal or end-centered organization that is nowhere present in the matter that preceded it" (TG 124). Higher forms of life express this in the form of intentionality, the purposeful direction of means to an end. The quest for artificial "intelligence" exemplifies this challenge. *Second*, John Haldane argues that the origin-of-life theories do not provide an explanation for the "origin of self-reproduction" (TG 125). Flew comments: "It seems to me that Richard Dawkins constantly overlooks the fact that Darwin himself, in the fourteenth chapter of *The Origin of Species*, pointed out that his whole argument began with a being which already possessed reproductive powers (FH 201)." *Third*, mathematician David Berlinski, describes coding and information processing that allows biological machines to turn amino acids into just the right proteins based on instructions from DNA. Many writers have noted that Darwin's work explains how life changes through genetic mutation but provides no explanation for the origin of life itself with its complex machinery and genetic instruction set by which change is directed.

These three characteristics of life, intentionality, reproduction, and encoding, all require a satisfactory explanation of their origin from a material chemistry that does not exemplify them. Flew produces an impressive array of other thought leaders who see that these philosophical problems call for explanation: Carl Woeste (leader in origin-of-life studies), Paul Davies, Andy Knoll (Harvard Biology Professor), Antonio Lazcano (president of the International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life), John Maddox (editor emeritus of Nature), Gerald Schroeder, and George Wald (TG 126-32). Flew concludes that: "The only satisfactory explanation for the origin of such "end-directed, self-replicating" life as we see on earth is an infinitely intelligent Mind (TG 131).

Complexity. In his 2004 conversation with Gary Habermas, Flew seems to add a fourth teleological characteristic that that calls for explanation, that characteristic is complexity. He says: "…naturalistic efforts have never succeeded in producing "a plausible conjecture as to how any of these complex molecules might have evolved from simple entities."12 (FH 200)."

It is a bit surprising that missing from Flew's list of experts on design is the name of Francis Collins, director of Gnome project to map human DNA. Perhaps that is because Collin's book was so close in publication date to Flew's own.[32] What is more surprising is that Flew makes no mention of mathematician William Dembski's analysis and characterization of intelligence.[33] Perhaps Flew had not progressed far enough in his study of inductive logic, relying heavily on Swinburne, who himself does not cite Dembski's work. Alvin Plantinga's work on naturalism and design was publish after Flew's death so could not have been cited.[34] Moreland and Craig make a helpful contribution to teleology by reformulating an inductive argument into a forced alternative with three choices: physical necessity, chance, and design.[35] This is reminiscent of C. S. Lewis's trilemma: Jesus as Lord, lunatic, or liar. The argument is still inductive and fallible because the trilemma could have a fourth or fifth member, but when presented as a forced elimination option it appears deductive. The objector feels forced to present that fourth or fifth option.

Flew's Evolving Concept of God

God in 2004. The God which Flew confesses in 2004 is the "God of Aristotle" and "Deism of Mr. Jefferson" the American President. The evangelist that brought about Flew's decision was British philosopher David Conway and the arguments in his book *The Recovery of Wisdom*, though we have seen that Flew's intellectual journey has several other important mileposts. Flew says: "The God whose existence is defended by Conway and myself is the God of Aristotle."   Quoting Conway, Flew lists the following attributes which Aristotle ascribed the their God: immutability, immateriality, omnipotence, omniscience, oneness or indivisibility, perfect goodness, and necessary existence. Conway points out, though the reader cannot miss, that these attributes are those ascribed to God by theologians of the Judeo-Christian tradition (TG 92).

Although the 2004 God of Flew (Conway and Aristotle) may have some characteristics worthy of worship, this God does not interact with world He created in any way. He is an unmoved mover, immutable, He does not reveal Himself, from this God one would never expect a miracle. Since this God is immaterial and persons have bodies, this God does not have characteristics of a person. One cannot use analogical language that ascribes to God characteristics such as interactivity that we attribute to human persons. Flew still can make no sense of an incorporeal person who is present everywhere. Furthermore, if a body is essential to being a person, there can be no afterlife, no survival of a "soul." Through Flew's extended interview with friend and Evangelical apologist Gary Habermas, we know that Flew was adamant in the implications of his Deism. However, Flew's concept of God continued to evolve.

God in 2007. By 2007 when Flew's book was published, he had come to accept the idea of an incorporeal omnipresent Spirit. To him this idea was no longer incoherent, it had been "credibly addressed" by theists (TG 149). Flew summarizes: "Two such thinkers, Thomas Tracy and Brian Leftow, have systematically responded to the challenge of defending the coherence of the idea of an "incorporeal omnipresent spirit." While Tracy addresses the question the question of how a bodiless agent can be identified, Leftow attempts to show both why a divine being must be outside space and time and how a bodiless being can act in the universe (TG 149)." This is no small development, to employ a figure of speech effectively used by the physician Luke (Acts 27:20).

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[32] Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006). Although he does not favor the work of the Intelligent Design movement, he says that it deserves serious consideration, p. 183.

[33] William A. Dembski, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities*. Cambridge Studies in Probability, Induction, and Decision Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[34] Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011). See especially the two chapters on fine tuning and design discourse where Plantinga is critical of atheist Dennett but also analyzes that the arguments of intelligent design proponent Michael Behe. Plantinga proposes that God could have superintended evolution, p. 253. It is unclear that he distinguishes evolution as the origin of life versus evolution as guiding live through molecular machines and DNA once the latter exist. It also disappointing to see Plantinga propose faith as a "source of knowledge," p 44.

[35] Moreland and Craig, *Foundations*, pp. 494-5.

Action Theory: Thomas Tracy. One can and should read Flew's summary of Tracy and Leftow's arguments which he found convincing, but here are some snippits. Suffice it to say that Tracy plunges us deeply into the waters of action theory and what it means to be an agent who expresses intentions. Flew summarizes Tracy: "No antidualist argument shows that a body is a necessary condition for being an agent, since the condition for being an agent is simply to be capable of intentional action. God is an agent, he notes, whose every activity is intentional action. To speak of God as a personal being is to talk of him as an agent of intentional actions (TG 150).

Space and Time: Brian Leftow. Just as Tracy plunges us into action theory, Leftow plunges us deeply into theories of space and time. He claims that the idea of God as a personal agent being outside of space and time is consistent with Einstein's theory of special relativity. Flew summarized Leftow on God's timelessness: "No theist has ever thought that God was literally there in space. If he is not in space, then he is not in time (TG 151)." From God's timelessness Leftow derives some predicates that one cannot apply to God: he cannot forget, he cannot cease to do something, even intending appears to have a temporal reference inappropriate to a timeless God. Suffice it to say that not all philosophers of religion agree on which predicates cannot be applied to God. For example, William Lane Craig defends that God outside of time can experience before's and after's.

Flew's Conclusions

Flew's Method. "Science qua science cannot furnish an argument for God's existence. But the three items of evidence we have considered in this volume—the laws of nature, life with it's teleological organization, and the existence of the universe—can only be explained in the light of an Intelligence that explains its own existence and that of the world. Such a discovery of the Divine does not come through experiments and equations, but through an understanding of the structures they unveil and map." (TG 155).

Flew's Journey. As we have seen, Flew's journey from a-theism was a long one that entailed giving up deeply entrenched philosophical commitments. A journey motivated by a primary commitment to follow the evidence where ever it leads. What were some of the mileposts of this journey? He accepted Descartes' priority of epistemology but jettisoned the skepticism of David Hume about causality and the external world. He is in the empirical tradition of Logical Empiricism flowing from John Locke and David Hume. It would be fair to see Flew in the foundationalist tradition of epistemology that starts with basic beliefs and reasons from there.[36] He adopted the principle of existential causality (real world events such as the Big Bang have causes) in place of Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason. He sees himself in the tradition of "natural theology" following the argument "… by the exercise of unaided human reason (TG 93). He argued for philosophical realism on the grounds that philosophical idealism results in the death of science. Over a lifetime he changed his expectations from arguments for God that are deductive and certain to arguments that are inductive and probable.

He accepts a cosmological argument based on the Big Bang and two teleological arguments based on order in the laws of nature and Darwinian failure to explain the origin of life. He dismisses the moral argument even though for some scientists like Francis Collins it is the most persuasive.[37] Flew's dismissal confuses a need for God as the ground of morality with the near universal existence of moral data in the human experience, what C. S. Lewis has called the universal Tao[38] and about which anthropologists have wrangled[39] He disdains the ontological argument (FH 201).

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[36] For a helpful overview of foundationalism in epistemology see W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998) pp. 77-104.

[37] Collins, *The Language of God*, 21-22. Collins read C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960) Book I.

[38] C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943).

[39] Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Heart* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

In 2004 he continues to reject the concept of an incorporeal omnipresent Spirit as incoherent (TG 148, FG 204-5). But by 2007 he is persuaded by Thomas Tracy and Brian Leftow (TG 149) to see an incorporeal person as coherent. Although Flew does not elaborate, it would appear from the writings of Tracy mentioned by Flew that the identity and re-identity of an incorporeal person is through the intentional actions of that person. God is the "God Who Acts" in contrast to the immutable God of Aristotle and Deism who does not, at least not after His creation of the universe. But for Flew, in what way does God act and how do we perceive those actions? It is unclear at this point why Flew did not consider the claims for special revelation by God including the divine providence and the miraculous. Is it not the intentional aspect of the Biblical miracle accounts that warrant the term "sign"? Does not the phrase "in order that" (Mk 2:10, 11) suggest an intentional connection? It would seem that the work of action theorists is at the core of any justification of God's action and of the justification of special revelation.

Flew opened himself to a dualism of body and spirit when he accepted that an incorporeal person was not incoherent, and that an incorporeal person could establish and reestablish identity through intentional actions. He says: "No antidualist argument shows that a body is a necessary condition for being an agent" (TG 150). Flew does not need the exact dualism of Descartes but could argue any of the more recent unified dualisms. In spite of his dualism he does not accept the survival of the soul after death. Nor does he accept the Resurrection of Jesus. Regarding stories of out of the body experiences proposed by Habermas, Flew wanted evidence that brain wave tracings were gone during these experiences. This line of reasoning by Flew suggests that for human persons at least he still connected thought and identity with a body.

The Logic of Flew's Argument. The first thing to notice about the logical form of Flew's arguments is that they do not attempt deductive certainty, but follow the shift in modern philosophy to inductive forms that are fallible. Toward the end of his book, Flew quotes with approval Richard Swinburne's use of "P-inductive" argument from the existence of the universe to the existence of God. The argument provides a "very promising explanation" (TG 145). As we noted, in 1966 Flew was critical of arguments for God that failed deductive certainty.

Swinburne articulates a confirmation theory by which he defines a "P-inductive" argument as one for which the premises make the conclusion "probable" and a "C-inductive" argument as one for which the premises make the conclusion "more likely" or "more probable" than it would otherwise be.[40] Swinburne concludes that most arguments for theism result in good C-inductive arguments. Flew agrees with Swinburne's conclusions in general though with language that is much less precise as indicated in the following chart.

Argument	Swinburne, 13	Flew
Cosmological from Big Bang	C-inductive, 152	"begs an explanation" (TG 145)
Teleological from laws of nature	P-inductive, 166	"imposes itself on the rational mind (TG-112)
Teleological from fine tuning	C-inductive? 188	"the only viable explanation (TG-121)
Teleological from intentionality	P-inductive? 212	"the only satisfactory explanation (TG 132)
Moral awareness	C-inductive 218	Fails (TG 49)
Ontological argument	Not discussed 9	Fails (FH 201)
Miraculous Events	C-inductive 292	Fails
All Arguments taken together	P-inductive, 342	"only be explained" (TG 155)

Swinburne adds a further step to his confirmation theory that most non-theists miss—that inductive arguments are cumulative. That is, the C-inductive success of each of the above arguments can add up to the P-inductive success of a common conclusion, that God exists. When Flew draws his conclusion at the beginning of this section from all three lines of evidence that he examined, he is drawing a cumulative inductive conclusion. To repeat, he says: "the laws of nature, life with it's teleological organization, and the existence of the universe—can only be explained in the light of an Intelligence that explains its own existence and that of the world (TG 155)." As the chart above indicates, Flew's

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[40] Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, pp. 4-6.

conclusion is similar to that of Swinburne who calls the cumulative argument for God "P-inductive." That is, based on the evidence he has examined it is more probable that God exists than that he does not.

Flew frequently talks about how the data requires as an "explanation" that God exists. Swinburne develops his view of explanation. He proposes that explanation in science is fundamentally different from personal explanation. According to Carl Hempel, who wrote the standard work on explanation in science, results of your experiment have been explained when they have been subsumed under a law.[41] Swinburne proposes that when human action is concerned, intentional events are not subsumed under a law. Indeed, the inability to subsume a personal action under a law is an identifying characteristic of intentionality. It is the inability to subsume events under a law that calls out for a personal explanation. Along the way Swinburne distinguishes logical probability from subjective accounts of degrees of confidence and employs Bayes Theorem[42]

With Swinburne's help, Flew has a logical structure to support the existence of his 2007 concept of God. Although he did not adopt revelational theism, we have shown that between 2004 and 2007 his view of God changed from the Deist God who did not intervene in the affairs of the world to one that in theory could permit miraculous intervention, though Flew did not take that last step. By tracing Flew's journey we have also revealed progress in apologetics. There has indeed been a renaissance in theism and Christian apologetics with a dominance by Christian philosophers. But there is need for future work.

Beyond Flew: Miracle and Special Revelation

What Flew did not seem to realize or at least did not acknowledge is that his view of God in 2007 defeated Hume's argument that miracles are impossible because of the laws of nature. A God who interacts with His creation can perform miracles, indeed might be expected to do so. As C. S. Lewis put it, if nature is not the whole show, then miracles are possible. This opens up the possibility of a further argument for God, that of special revelation through miraculous events, particularly the Resurrection of Jesus.

One can think of the argument from miracles as having two parts: how would you give evidence for them, and how are they evidence for God? This is sometimes stated as what proves the Resurrection and what does the Resurrection prove. Regarding the second question, William Dembski's work in Intelligent Design discusses the nature of signs, and what they signify. He treats the argument from miracles as an argument from "best explanation."[43]

However, there is still Hume's second argument, even if miracles are possible how would you establish through historical evidence that an extraordinarily infrequent event happened. From the very first time I read Hume's arguments in 1966, they struck me as wrong for two reasons. One does not need to define an event (such as a miracle) for it to be treated as evidence. Moreover, although miracles are improbable in comparison with the regularity of nature, rare events can have a regularity of their own that lends credibility to accounts of them. Miracles could happen just frequently enough to establish a pattern, but infrequently enough so as preserve the elements of sign and wonder. Let us call this the "non-natural frequency principle."

New Testament scholar Craig Keener has argued that many cultures do not have an anti-miraculous bias because miracles are frequent enough in the culture to provide an expectation. In his two volume work he has documented miraculous events in multiple regions of the world.[44] This work is somewhat unique in addressing the questions of credibility through regularity.

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[41] Carl Hempel, *Philosophy of Natural Science* (Prentice Hall, 1966).

[42] Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, chapters 1 through 4. A helpful introduction to Bayes Theorem is Sharon Bertsch McGrayne, *The Theory That Would Not Die* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[43] William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1999).

[44] Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of New Testament Accounts*. 2 Volumes. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

But one does not need supernatural events of a Christian nature to establish a pattern of non-natural frequency. The regularity of any supernatural event would suffice. In this regard there is also good documentation.[45]

There is an interesting implication of the non-natural frequency principle. If it holds, then it is no longer necessary to establish the existence of God in order to defeat Hume's two arguments. Rather, logically, arguments from miracle could stand on their own to establish the existence of God, without the complexity of the arguments Flew found most convincing. Or better yet, C-inductive arguments from miracle could be combined with others such as a C-inductive moral or teleological argument with no need for cosmological type arguments. The argument from the Resurrection and fulfilled prophecy could be stand on their own without other theistic arguments. In this scenario, one would need to address counterfeit claims from unclean spirits. One way to do this is with a power principle such as: whenever Christians encounter supernatural events intentionally caused by such spirits, Christians have power over them.

Historian, legal scholar, and apologist John Warwick Montgomery put forth an inductive defense of Christianity that is consistent with the non-natural frequency principle, the priority of Biblical miracles, the existence of occult phenomena, and the power of Christians over it. His inductive argument is an argument from best explanation.[46] He is most widely known for his historical works.[47] However, most treatments of Montgomery's apologetic method miss entirely his second career as a lawyer, judge, and founder of multiple legal institutions. Grounding apologetics in legal reasoning represents for him somewhat of a return to sanity from the excesses of professional philosophy. In a court of law one may not suppose any wild hypothesis to save a client, but one is restricted to by legal principles.[48] Furthermore, legal theory has embedded within it the principle of intentionality so needed by apologists to defeat materialist reductionist arguments. The difference between manslaughter and murder is intentionality.[49]

Regarding the evidence for miracles, Flew was exposed to some of the best defense of Jesus' Resurrection in debates with his friends Gary Habermas and Terry Miethe,[50] Flew's was not persuaded by historical documents even within 30 to 50 years of Jesus death. He wanted contemporary accounts. In 2004 discussion between Habermas and Flew, just following Flew's public announcement that he was a theist, Habermas cited accounts of out of the body deathbed experiences. To this Flew had asked whether the person had brainwave tracings and Habermas had provided evidence of that (FH 204, 205). Flew had written in correspondence with Habermas that this evidence "certainly weakens if does not completely refute my argument against doctrines of a future life" but in 2004 Flew not yet willing to give in. He was still troubled by how do identify a bodiless person.[51] After this but prior to 2007 Flew accepted the concept of a bodyless person, however he still rejected the resurrection. There is no record that Flew changed his mind about that before his death in 2010.

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[45] John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers: The World of the Occult* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1973). Demon Possession: Papers Presented at the University of Notre (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1975; NRP Books, 2015).

[46] John Warwick Montgomery, "The Theologian's Craft" *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1970) pp. 267-313.

[47] John Warwick Montgomery, *Where Is History Going* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969).

[48] See John Warwick Montgomery, "A Lawyer's Defense of Christianity.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxMEisHKewc

[49] John Warwick Montgomery, *The Law Above the Law: Why the law needs biblical foundation / How legal thought supports Christian truth*. Including Greenleaf's Testimony of the Evangelists (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975). Also *History Law and Christianity, with commendatory letter from C. S. Lewis* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy, 2002). Also

[50] Gary Habermas, Antony Flew, and Terry Miethe, Did Jesus Rise From the Dead? (New York: Harper & Row, 1987). Also see The Resurrection Debate (Gary Habermas and Antony Flew, Did the Resurrection Happen?: A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Antony Flew (Veritas Books, 2003). This is the text of the Veritas Forum at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. See also Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, The Case for the Resurrection (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004).

[51] Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland. Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998.

Observations and Conclusions

1. New inductive formulations of the cosmological and teleological Arguments for God's existence bypass the traditional objections of Hume, Kant, and others based on deductive logic that expected certainty. These arguments convinced Antony Flew, the world's most notorious atheist, to change his mind. Other atheists have followed suit.
2. Given that the universe had a beginning in time some fourteen and a half billion years ago, evolutionary explanations have had their wings clipped. Monkey's with typewriters need more than just a term paper extension, it's time to look for intelligent causes.
3. The fine-tuned laws of nature have convinced many of the need for intelligent design. The complexity of the human Gnome has had a similar result.
4. The "free will defense" against the problem of evil has been elaborately argued and has convinced Antony Flew not to blame God. The problem of evil has ceased to play a serious role among professional philosophers of religion in the debate about God's existence.
5. The Coherence of theism debate resulted in reconsideration of attributes of God.
6. The use of set theory to distinguish a mathematical infinite from an actual infinite has blunted the force of an actual infinite regress of existential causes.
7. Hume's objections to miracles have been successfully answered opening the way for a renewed systematic work on special revelation. Most writers on the topic of miracles have argued, if nature is not the whole show, if supernatural causes exist, then Hume's argument against the possibility of miracles is
8. New formal documentation of supernatural events such as miracles and death-bed experiences have gained respectability.
9. Legal reasoning in Christian Apologetics can be used to restrict the wild imaginations of those who will propose anything to avoid God. Explanations proposed in a court of law must have some basis in fact.
10. Efforts in action theory and law are profitable. It is time for a systematic volume on Christian Evidences.
11. Dialogue through careful argumentation can changes minds. Conferences like the Stone-Campbell can be instruments of this. In 1950 the Oxford Socratic Club did so and since 1978 the Society of Christian Philosophers has done so.
12. Contemporary Stone-Campbell Movement apologists following in the tradition of Campbell's debates have made and impact.