

Are We An Effect Without A Cause?

A mother is working in the kitchen. In the adjoining room her five and six year olds are playing and watching TV. Above the din of the TV, she hears hearty childhood laughter accompanied by cries of foul, the squeals of unrestrained pleasure with warnings to desist or one or the other will go tell mom. There is nothing unusual, only the things that predictably accompany her two beloved charges whenever they are together. She hears a "thump" louder than the TV, followed by an eerie serenity, interrupted only by the steady sounds of an ordered children's program. This sound of silence screams over the noise of the TV. She moves quickly to the family room. The TV is on, as expected. The children are sitting quietly on the couch, not as expected. Her eyes quickly scan the room. At the far left, behind the reclining chair (the one the children had been told frequently was an item for sitting on, not a pirate ship for sailing the seven seas), she observes a shelf, filled with books, vases and other decorative items. All looks the same, except for a peculiar void in the middle, coincidentally a place which housed a favorite vase, a family heirloom. Closer examination reveals that the vase is still there, only on the floor... in fourteen, randomly sized pieces. For some reason this seems to agitate the mother. Her eyes glare at the children. Their faces are covered with a horrid mixture of fear and guilt. Mom cries, "Who broke the vase!" The children reply in perfect unison, "We didn't do nothin'! It just fell off on its own!" The mother looks questioningly at them, but, quickly concludes that, since she was not there to witness the actual event, she has to accept the explanation that the vase fell from the shelf without a cause.

What is wrong with this story? We instantly recognize that any sane mother would not be so gullible. Without seeing the actual event and without a confession, she knows from the sounds that emanated from the adjoining room, the broken vase, the reduction of noise, the peaceful posture of the children, and the guilty looks on their faces, that the children caused the vase to fall and break; a simple determination of cause on the basis of the effects that were witnessed. This is what, in legal terms, would be a prima facie case. There is no witness and no confession, but an irrefutable case is in hand.

The odd thing is that there are people today, certain atheists, humanists, and such like, that suggest that we, that is the universe and the humans that inhabit this tiny corner of it, came into being without a cause. If the mother above seems foolish to believe that a vase could break without a cause, what can we conclude about the claim that an effect as grand as the universe and human life was produced by no one? To us that claim appears to be void of sense.

What we have been considering here is fundamentally a powerful argument for the existence of God. We begin with the axiom that there is no effect without a cause. Since we are notably an effect, we came into being by some cause. We suggest that this again points to God.

Another point that we should consider at this time is that not only do we

understand that every effect has to have its cause, but the cause has to be equal to or greater than the effect that is produced. This rather simple and obvious truth, when considering the origin of the universe and life, leads potentially to overload of the mind. We understand that when we see a five hundred pound weight lifted, but not the lifter, the lifter is going to be well muscled and strong. We have no expectation that a ten year old child will lift the weight. We expect to be impressed with the physical stature of the weight lifter.

Similarly, when we consider the vast physical magnitude of the universe and attempt to imagine the immense power possessed by the one who created it, we have to be immeasurably impressed. If we conclude that it is God that created it all, He can be more than the mortal mind can grasp. What kind of power is this dynamic that produced and now drives all that is? At this point our journey has taken on a somewhat frightening aspect. Do we want to approach such a power? We suggest that fear is a reasonable reaction and understandably quite strong, but the attraction is more reasonable and stronger still. Come, let us travel on.