

Fine-Tuned for Life: A Teleological Argument for God's Existence – A Very Short Case

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Design implies a designer. If there were evidence that the universe is designed, then it would imply the existence of a transcendent, cosmic designer. I would argue that there are, in fact, many evidences for design in the universe – both at the cosmological and biological levels – and thus there is evidence for a cosmic designer. Here, I wish to focus on just one aspect of cosmological design known as “fine-tuning.”

WHAT IS FINE-TUNING?

The universe could have been very different from the way it actually is. For example, if the initial conditions of the universe had been different, the universe would have been different. Some universes would only last for a brief time before collapsing in on themselves and ceasing to exist. Others would expand so fast that matter could not coalesce. Either way, there would be no intelligent life. The same is true of the laws of nature. The laws of nature have taken on specific strengths that we call “constants,” but the laws of nature could have taken on different strengths. If the strength of the physical constants were different, they would result in different kinds of universes, most of which would prohibit the existence of intelligent life.

The initial conditions and physical constants (ICPC) are said to be “fine-tuned” for life because the life-permitting range of values for the ICPC are extremely small compared to the range of all physically possible values.¹ If the actual values for those physical constants were just slightly different, there would be no intelligent life within the universe, and in some cases, no universe capable of sustaining its own existence over time. The precision required for a life-permitting universe defies imagination. Let me provide just two examples of fine-tuning.

EXAMPLES OF FINE-TUNING

Gravity

The strength of gravity could have taken on any one of one trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion possible strengths ($10^{60} = 1$ followed by 60 zeros = 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000). However, it assumed just one strength – and it just so happens that the strength it assumed is the only strength that would allow for the development of intelligent life. If the strength of gravity were one part stronger, the universe would not expand quickly enough to form terrestrial bodies. If it were one part weaker, the universe would expand too quickly to form terrestrial bodies. Either way, no life.

To get a picture of just how precise gravity has to be, imagine a ruler stretching 14 billion light years across the observable universe (82 billion trillion miles). Each inch on the ruler represents a possible

¹There are other layers of fine-tuning as well, including the laws of gravity and our local solar system.

value for the force of gravity. Now imagine a pointer that could be moved along the ruler to indicate the actual value of gravity. That pointer would have to be set within a 1" space along that ruler for life to exist. If you moved the pointer 1" to the right or 1" to the left of its actual value, life would be impossible.

Initial Entropy

Disorder increases as you move forward in time. That means the universe was in its most ordered state at the Big Bang. This is what scientists call a "low entropy state." In the beginning, mass and energy were finely balanced. The initial distribution of mass-energy is referred to as entropy fine-tuning.

Cosmologist, Roger Penrose, calculated how fine-tuned the initial entropy needed to be by comparing the number of mass-energy configurations that would result in a universe like ours [$10^{10(101)}$] to the number that would result in black hole dominated universes [$10^{10(123)}$]. The latter number is so much bigger than the former that when you divide the two numbers, you still end up with $10^{10(123)}$.² That means the initial entropy was fine-tuned to $10^{10(123)}$.

To give you a sense of how large this number is, consider the fact that there are only 10^{80} elementary particles in the observable universe. If we used each elementary particle to represent each number in $10^{10(123)}$, it would require 10^{43} more universes the same size as ours just to write the number out! That's 10 billion billion billion billion billion billion more universes!

EXPLAINING THE FINE-TUNING

Imagine a universe-generating machine with hundreds of dials, with each dial containing trillions upon trillions of possible settings, but only one setting that would allow for intelligent life to develop in the universe. Randomly set each dial to a specific value and press the "create universe" button. Are you more likely to get a universe containing life or a universe prohibiting life? The vast majority of configurations would result in a life-prohibiting universe. Only a tiny portion would result in a universe capable of supporting life. This invites a question: Of all the ways our universe could have been, why is it that the basic features of the universe fall within an excessively improbable range that makes intelligent life possible?

Could it be the result of chance? No. Chance can't account for the fine-tuning because these values were set at the beginning of the universe. The odds of getting the numbers just the right on the first attempt are next to none.

Could it be the result of physical necessity? Could there be something about the laws of nature that require the precise universe we are in? No. Our modal intuitions tell us that the universe could have been different from the way it is. And even if our modal intuitions are wrong, what could possibly make it necessary that our universe have the precise properties it does? Whatever X would make it necessary would have to have existed prior to the universe, and thus that X would have to be immaterial in nature.

The only other possibility is design. Design is the best explanation because we know from our uniform and repeated experience that the only cause able to set multiple parameters at precise measurements

²Stephen C. Meyer, *The Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries that Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe* (New York: HarperOne, 2021), 148.

to accomplish a particular purpose is intelligent minds. *Someone* set the values for the laws of nature to allow for our existence.

A good number of notable scientists who are keenly aware of the fine-tuning problem have noted their openness to the design hypothesis as the best explanation. For example, Massimo Pigliucci writes that “Should we conclusively determine that the probability of existence of our universe is infinitesimally small, and should we fail to explain why physical constants have assumed the quantities that we observe, the possibility of a designed universe would have to be considered seriously.”³ Paul Davies (British astrophysicist) agrees: “There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all....It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature’s numbers to make the Universe....The impression of design is overwhelming.”⁴

IDENTIFYING THE DESIGNER

The conclusion that the fine-tuning is best explained by a designing intelligence is extremely informative, but it still leaves one wondering regarding the identity of the designer. Who, or what, designed the universe? Through a logical analysis, I think we can make great advancements toward answering this question.

The Designer Is God

We can safely rule out the idea that the designer is some sort of mathematical law, force, or abstract object. Design requires purpose, forethought, and intelligence. These features belong uniquely to minds, and minds belong uniquely to personal agents. The designer is a *who*, not a *what*.

Could the designer be an alien of some sort? No. If aliens exist, they would have developed within our universe. Aliens could have only developed in a universe that was already fine-tuned for intelligent life. If fine-tuning had to be in place prior to the aliens, then aliens cannot be the cause of the fine-tuning. Whoever fine-tuned the universe must have existed prior to the universe, and thus must be an immaterial, transcendent being.

Could the designer be a finite deity? No. Any finite deity would be contingent.⁵ Contingent beings require external causes, so there would have to be a second god who explains the existence of the creator god. This would invite an infinite regress because the second finite god would need an explanation in a third finite god, and the third finite god would require an explanation in a fourth finite god, *ad infinitum*. An infinite regress is impossible, therefore, the designer cannot be finite.⁶ He must be

³Massimo Pigliucci, “The Provine-Scott Discussion at the RET: Methodological vs. Philosophical Naturalism,” available from www.rationalists.org/rc/1998_spring/provine-scott.htm; Internet; accessed 26 February 2008.

⁴Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint: New Discoveries in Nature's Creative Ability To Order the Universe* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 203.

⁵“Being” often connotes consciousness in modern parlance. That’s not what philosophers have in mind when they speak of contingent beings. The term could just as easily be expressed as “contingent thing.”

⁶It is logically and metaphysically possible that our universe was designed by a finite divine/spiritual being who was himself created by the metaphysically necessary God of theism. It’s also possible that our universe was created by a finite divine/spiritual being who was himself created by another finite divine/spiritual being, who was himself created by the metaphysically necessary God of theism, and so on. So in saying that the designer of our universe cannot be finite, I don’t mean to imply that it is metaphysically or logically impossible that our universe was created by a finite god. It is possible, but given the principle of parsimony (Occam’s Razor), there is no need to multiply causal entities beyond necessity. There is no reason to invoke a finite god to explain the design of our universe when the metaphysically necessary being is adequate to the task.

a metaphysically necessary being who requires no causal explanation.⁷ The only being that fits this bill is the God of theism. Only a theistic God can explain the fine-tuning.

This narrows the religious options down to the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Can we narrow it down even further to just one religion? Yes. There is one piece of evidence that decisively points to Christianity as best describing the theistic God: the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus taught many things concerning God's identity and will. Some considered His teachings to be blasphemous and executed Jesus on that basis. If Jesus were teaching false things about God, then He deserved his fate. However, God raised Jesus from the dead. In doing so, God vindicated Jesus' teachings and claims. That means we can trust that Jesus' religious perspective was correct. Since Jesus' teachings differed from both Judaism and Islam, those religions do not represent the most accurate view of God. Christianity alone tells us what the designer God is like.

The million dollar question, of course, is why we should believe Jesus rose from the dead. Answering that question is beyond the scope of this paper, but I have detailed the evidence elsewhere and refer you to those resources for more information.⁸

CONCLUSION

The universe is finely-tuned for the existence of intelligent life. We observe hundreds of examples of fine-tuning at multiple levels. Many of these finely-tuned parameters have to be so precise that it defies human comprehension. The fine-tuning cannot be explained by chance or physical necessity, but only by design. Only intelligent agents are capable of setting multiple parameters at extremely precise measurements to accomplish a purpose. God designed the universe in such a way that it could host intelligent life. The fine-tuning of the universe, then, provides a powerful argument for the existence of God.

Whether the metaphysically necessary God of theism created our universe immediately or mediately through finite intermediaries, the fact remains that the God of theism is ultimately responsible for the design of our universe. Since we have reason to believe a metaphysically necessary God exists and no independent reason to believe a finite god exists, there is no reason to believe the designer of our universe was a finite god.

⁷This trades on the contingency argument for God's existence. See <https://thinkingtobelieve.com/2023/11/17/theistic-arguments-4-the-contingency-argument-for-gods-existence> for more information regarding this argument. I've also written briefly on this argument at <https://thinkingtobelieve.com/2012/06/21/even-if-the-universe-is-eternal-it-still-needs-a-cause/> and <https://thinkingtobelieve.com/2013/04/23/contingency-argument-for-gods-existence/>.

⁸For a short case, see <https://thinkingtobelieve.com/2019/04/21/the-historical-evidence-for-the-resurrection-of-jesus-a-short-case-2/>. For a fuller treatment, see <http://onenesspentecostal.com/resurrection.htm>.