

sub-creation/theology [Digest urth.v030.n173]

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 22 Aug 2001

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John Bishop — 22 Aug 2001, 14:09

I think there's another Wolfean theological point to be made about the use of Reason to understand the Universe.

Dan says:

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...The detectives, professional and amateur, have problems that they solve, usually with a combination of reason and metaphysics, and so of course Wolfe is trying to tell us that our own universe is similarly tractable.

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And of course that's really worth digging into.

If God makes the universe and us in it in such a way that we can use our reason to understand it, then that tells us about God. We note that there are some puzzles which are hard (chemistry) and some which are easy (Galilean physics). We note that some hard bits have easy approximations (Aristotelean or "cartoon" physics).

This all seems to imply three things:

1. We are meant to use reason to uncover the Universe, and have been given a graded series of exercises to help us do this; Reason is therefore good, God is good;
2. This is not the only possible universe and has been carefully created to have this characteristic structure (c.f. Mozart and "Peace" in my earlier message; the Universe is a work of art (or Art));
3. We are therefore meant to deduce this and thus be lead to see there is a creation, and so be lead on by this path as well to much of what used to be called Natural Theology;

In other words, it's a miracle that the Universe is comprehensible at all, and doubly so that it's comprehensible by Reason. Gravity by the inverse square? Euclidian space (more or less)? Orbits that are conic sections? How obvious a set-up do you need to catch the clue?

Now I personally don't believe this, but I think it's a respectable argument, and one which has an appeal to people who write or read mysteries.

It's Deism rather than Christianity, but it's not explicitly modern. The Classical world was receptive to the power of Reason. And since Lewis has said that the way we are created "in His image" is that we have reason and can love and create, it fits in with much Christian theology as well (except for not mentioning sin and the need for redemption).

-John Bishop