

Philip Goff, *Why? The Purpose of the Universe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), ISBN 9780198883760; 192 pp., €13,99.

Philip Goff's newest book makes a fascinating case for the reality of cosmic purpose and the objectivity of value. Goff, who is a well-known defender of *panpsychism*, seeks to chart a middle course between traditional theism and atheistic physicalism. He starts off with a chapter discussing the relationship between meaning, value and cosmic purpose. Cosmic purpose, unlike value, is not required for a meaningful life, in his view, but it does have the potential to greatly enrich our life. With regards to value, Goff's views have developed from *value subjectivism*, via *value nihilism*, to *value fundamentalism*, on which value is both objective and fundamental. In other words, evaluative and normative facts are as basic as the fundamental truths of physics and mathematics (4-15).

According to Goff, *cosmic fine-tuning* is likely on the *value-selection hypothesis*, the hypothesis that (some of) the fundamental constants of physics were selected to allow for a universe with things of significant value. Put simply, the foundations of our cosmos were laid for the sake of value, and our world is shaped by this overarching purpose. Cosmic fine-tuning for life thus supports the reality of both objective value and cosmic purpose. Goff argues that the alternative 'multiverse' explanation of fine-tuning commits the *inverse gambler's fallacy* (postulating many 'gamblers' to explain the observation of a very lucky one). Further, a multiverse only renders it likely that our universe is fine-tuned if a significant portion of the universes are fine-tuned (16-35). This point is difficult to follow. After all, it seems that our universe is *essentially* fine-tuned. Perhaps Goff means that there would have to be many fine-tuned universes to make it likely that our specific fine-tuned universe exists.

Goff proceeds to make a case for *pan-agentialism*, according to which even fundamental particles have a kind of consciousness and agency (50, 59). He also argues for *teleological cosmopsychism*, on which the universe itself is conscious and strives to maximize goodness (131). This is one of a number of explanations of consciousness and fine-tuning that he discusses as alternatives for 'omni-God' theism (85-136). His main objection to traditional theism is a version of the problem of evil: It would immoral for God to intentionally create a universe like ours (91). However, he does not deal sufficiently with the challenge horrific suffering and evil pose to the value-selection hypothesis more generally. Presumably, these things are insurmountable 'disvaluables', i.e. no amount of value can justify, outweigh or counterbalance them. But then the value-selector would likely not select the physical constants our universe has. Our world would not be worth creating. Why not make a universe with less value, but without horrific suffering?

The book closes with some discussion of ethical implications of cosmopsychism. Goff's vision for how one might live as a cosmopsychist contains important elements of value, morality and purpose, as well as spiritual growth and community with others. His cosmopsychism is undeniably richer and more meaningful than nihilistic physicalism, but it needs to be fleshed out in more detail. For instance, how is objective value structured in the cosmopsychist's world? Theism offers us not only objective value but also a non-arbitrary hierarchy of value, that has a perfect being as its summit. This is a highly intuitive top for a value hierarchy. And if Goff does not want to go all the way to this highest peak, then at what non-random point is he going to get off the bus? This relates to another worry, namely that his worldview may be littered with many 'brute' (unexplained) facts. But to some extent this still unclear. It will be interesting to see how Goff's intellectual journey unfolds in the coming years.

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