

Antony Flew: Why the World's Leading Atheist Changed His Mind - A Summary of His Arguments

For decades, Antony Flew was considered the world's leading philosophical defender of atheism. His essays such as *Theology and Falsification* (1950) and books like *God and Philosophy* (1966) shaped generations of secular thought. Flew argued tirelessly that belief in God was irrational and unnecessary, insisting that atheism should be the "default position" until compelling evidence proved otherwise.

Yet in 2004, at the age of 81, Flew shocked the philosophical world by announcing that he now believed in God. In his book *There Is a God* (2007), co-authored with Roy Abraham Varghese, Flew carefully explained the intellectual journey that led him away from atheism toward a belief in a Divine Mind. His conversion was not emotional, but rational, rooted in what he saw as overwhelming new evidence from science and philosophy.

Below is a summary of the key arguments that persuaded him.

1. The Rational Structure of the Universe

Flew observed that the universe is governed by rational, mathematical, and discoverable laws. This order is not random or chaotic but elegant and intelligible. As Einstein once said, "the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible."

Flew concluded that this intelligibility itself points to a rational source:

"The laws of nature seem to be the product of a mind." (*There Is a God*, p. 91)

For half a century he had assumed these laws "just existed." But late in life he realized that the very existence of orderly, knowable laws required an explanation beyond mere materialism.

2. The Fine-Tuning of the Cosmos

Modern physics has revealed that the universe is "fine-tuned" in ways that make life possible. Tiny variations in the strength of gravity, electromagnetism, or nuclear forces would have rendered life impossible.

Flew wrote:

"Some sort of intelligence must have been involved in the laws of the universe." (p. 114)

While atheists might appeal to chance or multiverse theories, Flew found those explanations unconvincing. The precise calibration of the universe looked to him like the work of design, not accident.

3. The Origin of Life and DNA

The most decisive evidence for Flew came from biology. The discovery of DNA revealed not just chemistry but information—coded instructions for building life. To Flew, this informational complexity could not be explained by unguided processes.

"What I think the DNA material has done is show... that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements together." (p. 75)

For him, DNA was a kind of “signature” of intelligence, a rational imprint woven into the foundation of life.

4. The Problem of Consciousness

Another factor was the mystery of human consciousness. If the universe were only matter and energy, how could subjective experience, rational thought, and moral awareness emerge?

Flew admitted that materialist accounts of consciousness failed to satisfy him:

“The present state of philosophy of mind is not such that it can solve the problem of consciousness.” (p. 156)

To him, mind could not be reduced to matter. The reality of human thought pointed back to a greater Mind.

5. Intellectual Integrity: Following the Evidence

Finally, Flew emphasized that his shift was not emotional but rational. Throughout his career, he claimed to follow Socrates’ maxim: “Follow the evidence, wherever it leads.” For most of his life, the evidence seemed to favor atheism. But as science advanced, he believed the evidence began to point clearly toward God.

“My whole life has been guided by the principle of Plato’s Socrates: Follow the evidence, wherever it leads.” (p. 22)

And so, late in life, he admitted that his atheism was no longer tenable.

Conclusion: From Atheism to Theism

Antony Flew did not become a Christian; he described his belief as a form of deism—a recognition that an intelligent Creator exists, though without affirming divine revelation. Still, his intellectual journey remains remarkable.

After decades as atheism’s foremost champion, Flew came to see theism as the only explanation that adequately accounted for:

- The order and laws of nature
- The fine-tuning of the cosmos
- The informational complexity of DNA
- The mystery of consciousness

His story demonstrates the power of reasoned reflection to overturn long-held assumptions, even in the twilight of life. For those exploring questions of faith and science, Flew’s change of mind offers a vivid reminder that truth has the power to surprise, and that intellectual honesty may lead in unexpected directions.

 Reference:

Antony Flew with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There Is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).