

CHAPTER 1



INTENTIONALLY CREATED

If we are honest, we must admit that we have a tendency to be control freaks. While some may be more apt in “going with the flow” than others, everyone fundamentally desires to exercise control over their lives and circumstances. This insatiable lust for control contributes to our chronic restlessness as we seek to construct our perfect environment, in which we have the final say in everything that happens to us or around us. We try to control our hours at work, where we will live, whom we allow in our lives, and even what those people do. On a broader scale, governments established by collections of control freaks attempt to control poverty, economic behavior, and even the weather.

Yet, time and again we find our efforts to be in vain—we cannot exercise perfect control over our circumstances, much less other people, leading to frustration and anxiety and causing us to double down on controlling areas over which we have power.

This desire for control is evident in modern humanity’s obsession with autonomy and consent. We believe ourselves to be our own masters whose perceived rights cannot be impeded. We see ourselves as purely autonomous agents, free to do as we wish, provided it does not meet a particular definition of

“harm” done to another, and nobody may infringe on that autonomy without our consent.¹

Consent in this worldview essentially means positive permission that one explicitly desires and allows something to be done to them. To use an example with which we will all be familiar, consider the case of an unplanned pregnancy. Though the sex was consensual, the pregnancy was not, because the woman did not wish to become pregnant. She must therefore be allowed access to abortion, or else her autonomy is violated. Or so the argument goes. It is not our purpose here to discuss the issue of abortion, but the example is instructive: it demonstrates the degree to which we desire to control our lives, and the philosophical constructs we have established to protect this desire. Even the ubiquitous term “unplanned pregnancy” testifies to our expectation to be able to completely plan our own lives.

However, there is another force at work in our cultural worldview. While we both preach and practice autonomy, consent, and control in our own lives and societies, our view of the world as a whole is one of overwhelming randomness. This assumption rests on the belief that the universe and the life forms in it developed more or less randomly, that the earth and humanity itself are essentially accidents that just as well may not have existed. Beyond randomness in nature, we perceive randomness in history and cultural development. We speak

¹ “Autonomy ... is the state or condition of self-governance, or leading one’s own life according to reasons, values, or desires that are authentically one’s own.” *Britannica*, “Autonomy,” by James Stacey Taylor, last updated June 20, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/autonomy>. Political theorist Patrick Deneen captures the revolutionary consequences of this perspective. He says it leads to “a belief in an expanding and potentially limitless human capacity to control circumstance and effect human desires upon the world.” Patrick Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, narrated by Brian Holsoopple (Audible, 2018), at 01 hr., 3 min.

of random acts of violence and “hard luck” and muse on the accident of birth in a particular time and place.

One can plainly see the tension that exists between these two foundations of modern thought. On the one hand, we are told that perfect autonomy is the ideal for which we must strive, where all that we experience is consensual and controlled. On the other hand, we are told that the nature of the universe we inhabit is random and chaotic, undirected and incapable of being controlled.

This contradiction leads to profound frustration in that the ideal to which we aspire is impossible in reality, producing beliefs like the example given about abortion, in which a natural occurrence is seen as a violation because it did not happen on the terms of the autonomous individual. Because of these assumptions, we see spectacles such as a child suing his own parents because he did not consent to his own birth.

This frustration is perhaps most clearly seen in transgender ideology, in which the perceived randomness of birth into a particular body and the “assignment” of a certain sex at birth are decried as non-consensual and a violation of autonomy, and so they are targeted for conquest through social or medical intervention. When this tension between the mutually exclusive conceptions of autonomy and randomness is understood, then the depression, anxiety, hopelessness, and restlessness so prevalent in our culture today all begin to make more sense.

What then is the alternative? If the combination of a totally accidental universe with our natural impulses toward control and autonomy results in schizophrenic contradictions, then how must we reform our worldview? Is the only other option to be resigned to a stoic fatalism, to accept that we live in a random universe outside of our control? Do we deny human responsibility outright and accept that each person is simply a

passive victim of circumstance, unable to exercise any control over his life?

This conclusion is the consistent outworking of a worldview that believes in a chance universe—that our efforts to control are ultimately pointless and that there is no direction of history and no final purpose for anything. This perspective is poignantly summarized by atheist Richard Dawkins in his book *River Out of Eden*:

In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we would expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.²

This fatalism is no less depressing than the hopeless effort to exercise perfect autonomy, and it quite explicitly rejects the very idea of purpose and meaning. Furthermore, nobody can live consistently with this vision of the world: the moment we make a decision that we believe will benefit our family, or the moment we demand justice for a horrible crime or complain that our rights have been violated, we deny by our actions the notion that the universe is a place of random indifference. This idea is contrary to human nature itself.

Human beings intuitively long for joy, purpose, and contentment. We do not need to be taught these desires. They occur naturally, and they are good. We also naturally understand that we do exercise a certain level of control in this world, that

² Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* (Basic Books, 1995), 71.

there are cause and effect relationships, and that what we do matters. Still, we seek to convince ourselves of the opposing extremes we have been discussing, that we can possess total autonomy in a universe that is totally random, even though by our own experience this results only in hopelessness and chasing after wind.

The only solution that can answer our natural craving for peace and purpose is to understand that nothing in this universe—least of all our own lives—is random or accidental at all, but that everything was intentionally created for a specific reason.

The Bible begins with a claim of foundational truth through which the whole of reality and experience must be seen: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). This opening proclamation sets forth two and only two distinct kinds of being. There is God, who eternally exists, who is not said to have had a beginning but who is “in the beginning,” who exists independently of everything else, who simply *is*. Then there is everything He created, everything which had a definite starting point, that at one time was *not* and then *was*, which owes its existence to God and is totally dependent upon Him.

The biblical worldview starts with the assertion of these two basic categories of being: Creator and created. God is seen as possessing power and authority since He is able to bring forth from nothing something that previously did not exist. Creation is responsive to God—God makes it, and it is made. This basic responsiveness of the creation to its Creator is seen when God begins to shape the world according to His design and purpose: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). God, as the source of the world’s existence, has the authority to speak a command, and the created order

responds obediently to the command. This follows naturally from the Creator-created distinction—the Maker can tell the object He made how to function, and the object made is compelled to obey.

Right away, only a few verses into the Bible, we have the rejection of the worldview that presents an irreconcilable conflict between autonomy and randomness in favor of something that is natural and harmonious and that validates our deep instincts for purpose and direction. The notion of randomness is completely dismantled. The world did not come into existence and order by luck, chance, or accident, but by the intentional, willful decision of a personal, eternal Being. God *chose* to create the world and *chose* to design it in a particular way.

Yet the biblical worldview does not stop here; it does not present a God who created only to retreat far out of sight, leaving the universe to operate on its own principles. To do this would seem to lead either to a degree of randomness in existence or an impersonal principle akin to “karma,” in which everything is “balanced out” by some mysterious force. Neither of these are biblical, nor do they satisfy the human thirst for purpose. A personal Creator-God must lead to an ongoing, personal government of creation by that God, and this truth is exactly what the Bible teaches.

The Bible clearly reveals to us a God who is intimately involved in everything that happens in the universe. This is true from the broadest and most profound levels and down to the mundane and ordinary affairs of everyday life. This power and authority to personally direct all things is part of what makes the Creator totally unique and distinct from creation. When mockingly comparing Himself to the false gods that many would foolishly choose to worship, God asserts,