

**GOSSE AND OMPHALOS:
A DEFENSE OF AN OLD ARGUMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Philip H. Gosse presented an argument related to the age of the earth in 1857. This argument has been widely criticized by both creationists and non-creationist. Despite these wide spread attacks, many creationists make use of the "appearance of history" argument found in Gosse. Is such usage valid in the light of the many complaints of the concept? I try to formulated a clear and sound version of the Gosse arguments. I find the criticisms of Gosse unsound and the argument at least somewhat helpful to modern creationism.

INTRODUCTION

In 1857 Philip H. Gosse, an ornithologist and creationist [2, p.324], published a work entitled, Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot [9]. This work contained an argument that has formed a part of many creationist's explanation of apparent history beyond that allowed by their interpretation of the Biblical record in the universe [7]. It has also been attacked by non-creationists as "empty" and "irrelevant."

In this paper, I will attempt to show that the omphalos argument is coherent and potentially helpful to certain attempts to reach a "creationist" [10] cosmology. In doing this, I will argue that much of creationist literature does not deal with the omphalos argument and objections to it in a respectable manner [11]. For all that, the standard objections made to the omphalos argument fail. Second, I will attempt to show that there is a good reason, apart from the argument, for some Christians to believe that the argument applies to actual history. Finally, I will suggest an opening move in creating a creationist philosophy of science that this argument suggests.

Before beginning this attempt, it is perhaps necessary to make a few "disclaimers" about the purpose of this paper. It is not an attempt to "prove" the scientific truth of creationism. I also explicitly reject the notion that "evolution" and "creation" are mutually exclusive and the only logical alternatives in origin's science. My dissertation work is on Plato's Timaeus which I take to be a cosmology which is neither evolutionary nor creationist. This paper will, therefore, do nothing to disprove any theory of evolution. The omphalos argument could be modified to harmonize with a desire for a "short history" evolutionary scenario. To be "helpful" to a creationist theory is not to attack an evolutionary theory. This paper is also not committed to any particular view in the debate over whether creationism is scientific [3].

GOSSE AND GOSSE HISTORY

A formal rendering of the Gosse argument as it might be used by a creationist (as I have described creationist) could run something like this:

- (1) God is omnipotent [8].
- (2) God created the universe at some time t_1 .
- (3) At the moment of creation t_1 , no state of affairs S existed in the actual world W such that God could not create an object O with the appearance of history [12].
- (4) Therefore: At t_1 God could have strongly actualized a world with the appearance of history [13].
- (5) Therefore: (with x and n standing for any given amount of time) At t_1 or $t_1 + x$ the appearance of history in an object O which makes it appear that O existed at $(t_1$ or $t_1 + x) - n$, is not equivalent to O existing at $(t_1$ or $t_1 + x) - n$.

- (6) Therefore: Any object O that appears to have history did not necessarily exist at each moment in that history.
- (7) From 3: The universe did not exist prior to t1.
- (8) Therefore: The universe, which has an apparent history of t1-n, did not actually exist at t1-n [14].

Premises 1 and 2 are accepted by many within the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions. Premise 3 is more controversial and is the crux of the attacks on the Gosse argument.

The attack on Gosse occurs on three key fronts. First, the critic asserts that Gosse has opened a Pandora's box. If Gosse is correct, then it is possible that the world was created at any moment. There are infinite numbers of possible moments of creation from which to choose [15]. Isaac Asimov claims that this makes the argument, "irrelevant, for it can neither be proved nor disproved" [1]. Robert Schaedewald asserts that such an argument is empty since "an infinite number of mutually exclusive creation epochs and/or creators can be invoked." Second, it is argued that even if Gossean histories are possible, there is no good reason to reject "apparent" histories in their favor. Third, if one postulates the God of the Bible, the creation of the appearance of age is seen as being inconsistent with certain divine attributes. Since the Gossean creationist is usually within the Islamic, Jewish, or Christian tradition this is seen as a potent objection.

The standard creationist response to critics is similar to that of Henry Morris in The Biblical Basis for Modern Science. He says,

"To say that God could not create something with the appearance of age is the same as saying He could not create anything at all. Such an assertion is tantamount to atheism" [4].

Morris makes some other points, but this is the heart of his response to the critics. How adequate is it?

I believe Morris has missed the mark in his response [16]. He says:

- (1) God must create with the appearance of history (which Morris mistakenly calls the "appearance of age") to create.
- (2) To exclude the notion of appearance of age, is to therefore deny creation.
- (3) Since God must create to be God, to deny the appearance of history is equivalent to atheism.

Morris' argument flows from premise one. However, premise one is clearly false. It is not logically necessary for God to create with the appearance of history. The Gosse argument only claims that it is possible that he did so. One can imagine a possible world where, for some inscrutable divine reasons, God creates everything without the appearance of age. He could, for example, place within every object a clear token of its actual age. I am not, of course, saying God did so in the actual world, but he could have. This means that the first premise on the Morris "argument" is false. The argument, therefore, fails.

It is not clear where the argument is going in any case. The argument concludes by saying restrictions against the appearance of age lead to atheism. If the appearance of age is flawed, as the critic claims, and Morris insists on it, then it is Morris who has shown that his God cannot exist. . . not the critic. Let us, however, examine the attacks of the anticreationists to see if a better response could have been given by a Morris-style creationist.

I believe the first criticism of Gosse, that he postulates an infinite number of potential creations, misses the target. The critic believes that the Gosse-Morris style creationist is defending some particular model of creation. The Gossean argument does not prove that this model is true, since it also postulates an infinite number of other possible creations.

The Gosse argument does lead to the conclusion that it is possible that the world was created at any given time. This means that the Gossean argument does not prove some particular notion about when the universe was created. In fact, it introduces a strong element of skepticism about ever knowing when the cosmos came to be based only on the appearance of history. This may be a conclusion that the anticreationist (or anti-Gossean) dislikes, but to dislike an argument is not to refute it.

The Gosse argument does help the modern creationist. It is not as strong as the creationist might hope, but neither is it empty. The claim is made by the majority of scientists that the universe has the appearance of a history. If appearance of history is equivalent to actual existence at every point in that putative history, then creationism has been empirically falsified. But if appearance of history can be separated from actual existence, then the game is not over. The creationist will still have to show why one should not accept some particular moment of creation over another, but creation remains a possibility. If one has a Creator, then one is logically forced to admit the possibility that the moment of creation is not necessarily tied to the appearance of history.

The critic might then respond by arguing that this is, therefore, a good reason to deny the existence of a Creator.

Why open this box at all? This does not "help", however. The atheist could generate his own Gosse-type problem. How do we know that our apparent history was not generated by some evil scientist who keeps us as brains in an experimental vat? It is possible for the atheist that the appearance of history in the universe is wrong. Such arguments are exceedingly hard to refute [5].

The Gosse argument, therefore, rescues the creationists from the problem of the appearance of age to a limited extent. It prevents creationism from being falsified, it makes it possible. It does nothing, however, to make any given moment of creation more probable. This is an important limitation for creationists to keep in mind. Given the infinite number of possible creation moments now opened up, the creationist will have to show by further argument why the one postulated by his or her reading of the Bible should be selected.

The skeptic might respond that for all of Gosse's success in making a different point of creation possible, one should still accept the moment postulated by the scientific evidence. Why should a skeptic reject apparent history for any speculative Gossean history? Is not the most probable of the possible histories the one backed by the empirical data?

This second argument against the Gosse claim is an important one. It suggests that even if creation is possible, that one should still (if rational) accept the weight of evidence and go with "apparent history" over any other choice. The critic of Gosse feels that there is some advantage, and I would tend to agree, in preferring the history postulated by appearance over any of its possible competitors. This might be argued on grounds of simplicity or economy.

What if there is, however, great advantage in postulating some particular Gossean history for the universe? A rational person might decide that because of some large epistemological or ethical advantage gained by accepting certain religions postulating an "early" creation of the universe, that this was the best or most rational choice. In other words, it is plausible to think of a person having good reason to prefer some possible Gossean moment of creation on rational grounds.

What would such a person have given up? Less than might be thought. The person would still claim that rock x, for example, had the appearance of history y. She could even discuss y using standard methods of science. She could then, however, rationally state that of course this history was only a useful thought experiment, a possibility rejected because of some important advantage gained by a religious or philosophical system that postulated another logically possible moment of creation. She has denied no evidence of science or her senses. She has only denied a philosophical theory connecting that evidence with reality in a strong sense. She has done so on rational grounds.

Many critics might hold that this is not enough. They might demand any even stronger reason for postulating a Gossean history. I believe such a reason is found in the incompatibility of God's nature and the failure to create with the appearance of age. In short, for God to be what Christians claim God is, there must be an appearance of age. This sounds suspiciously like the earlier creationist argument made by Morris. In fact, given the usual insight displayed by Morris, it may have been the intent of his original comments. I am not claiming that I know what God did or must do within his sovereign will. I am fairly skeptical about such arguments. I am claiming that one standard attribute of God, namely His divine wisdom, is incompatible with the failure to create with the appearance of age.

Suppose a certain man foolishly claims to be perfectly wise. He then goes and mows his lawn. He mows his lawn using a pair of tweezers, leaving the usable lawn mower aside. He has no good reason for doing so. It would seem that this action would disqualify the man from perfect wisdom. A perfectly wise being is at least as efficient as he or she can be in order to achieve his or her ends. Put more formally:

Axiom 1: For every being x, it is possible that x is perfectly wise if and only if x brings about every state of affairs y that in a manner z, such that x could not have brought about y in a way more efficient than z.

Axiom 2: For all actions z and q and all states of affairs a, it is possible that an action z is more efficient than an action q if and only if z brings q to pass in the least possible amount of time.

Please note that these are necessary, but not sufficient attributes for a being to be perfectly wise or perfectly efficient.

Such constraints would of course allow for overriding reasons for behaving in "foolish" manners. The man with the tweezers might have some odd, but valid reasons for using tweezers. If the man had a good reason for cutting the lawn very slowly, his method might be justified and he might still be a candidate for perfect wisdom. On the other hand, as long as his desired end is achieved (an adequate lawn cutting in a simple case), the quickest method would be the most efficient. All things being equal, the man who cuts his lawn with tweezers would not be a candidate for perfect wisdom.

Consider then the creation of the world and a perfectly wise being, God. God must act in perfectly wise manner, which means (minimally) that He must act in the most efficient manner possible. Before the creation of free will beings, all events in the universe would unfold in a regular and perfectly controlled manner. There would be no possible cosmic event that could justify the cosmos actually existing. The existence of the actual world and the unfolding of the world in the mind of God would necessarily be exactly the same. On the other hand, with the creation of free will beings the "interesting" portions of cosmic history would begin. God would need to create the world at that point. It would be far more efficient to create the world with the appearance of history, even if God used evolution as a process. An "old earth" is incompatible with God's perfect wisdom. It is simply a waste of time! Contrary to Morris, one can imagine a god creating with no appearance of age, just not a god who could be perfectly wise and do so. Since Morris and Gosse both believe that their God is perfectly wise, Morris and Gosse must both believe in a creation with the appearance of age.

There are no possible reasons for God actualizing the creation before the appearance of free will beings, because there is no possible action or state of affairs contrary to the will of God. Every intent and purpose of God would have been necessarily actualized in a creation without free will beings. What could there be in the state of affairs leading up to the creation of free will beings that would create a rational purpose for such actual existence of the cosmos? Let me suggest, therefore, that a Gosse history tied to the appearance of angels and humans is the natural one for a Christian who has a perfectly wise God.

Notice that this argument does not prove that the universe was created by the Gosse/Morris god. It also does not prove that the universe was created with the appearance of age. It does show that a person believing in a potentially perfect creator (like Gosse and Morris) either is forced to believe in Gossean histories or has to perform the very difficult task of finding even a potential reason for the superiority and efficiency of an actual history to a Gossean history. The Morris/Gosse believer has, therefore, an independent reason to believe in an apparent history. He has also a potential time, the creation of humans and angels, for the actualization of that history. It also leaves the critic of Morris and Gosse to wonder how she will believe in a perfectly wise God and an old earth at the same time. It places Morris in the stronger position in the midst of traditional Christian believers. The third criticism of Gosse is an attack on premise three of the Gosse argument. It says that there is a state of affairs such that God could not create with the appearance of history. To do so, they argue would be inconsistent with the state of affairs where God is omnibenevolent at t_1 . To create with the appearance of evil would be to deceive. If one postulates the Jewish, Islamic, or Christian god, then such deception is inconsistent with God's character.

It is important to note that this is not (once again) a refutation of the Gosse argument. It simply argues that premise 3 of the Gosse argument is inconsistent with other beliefs of a Gosse or Morris about God. A gnostic or some other types of theist would have no problem with this objection. It does seem to prevent the argument from being used by the very persons who developed it, the creationist. If God did not choose to create with the actual age being equivalent to apparent age, then the God of Gosse and Morris cannot exist. He would be "internally inconsistent."

This argument can be responded to in two ways. First, I believe that one could be a consistent theist in the Morris-Gosse tradition and still believe in a God who deceives (in at least the one sense of deceive covered by the omphalos problem). Second, the Gosse-Morris person could argue that God did not deceive humankind. There might be sufficient evidence to make the notion of the age of the universe an uncertain one.

The notion that a good God could deceive seems at first an odd one. I believe sense can be made of it, however [17]. First, one must decide what is meant by deception. I believe most persons recognize at least two sorts of deception:

- (1) giving false information
- (2) withholding or obscuring some relevant information (thus allowing a person to reach a wrong conclusion).

Why would deception be wrong for God? God commands humans not to do it as part of the Ten Commandments, but that does not mean that God cannot do it. Things God forbids to humans, like taking life, are not forbidden to God. The Scripture is not clear on this issue either. "God is not a man that he should lie," but on the other hand He sends a spirit to deceive Ahab to bring about his (just) destruction.

We might generate two notions about God that are not contradictory from the Biblical evidence (which is the evidence Gosse and Morris accept):

- (1) God does not deceive us to our harm.
- (2) God may deceive us, if it is for our own good.

We might speculate that God does not lie in the first sense. He does not give false information, but he may withhold some relevant information from us if it is for our good.

God could, therefore, be trusted in what He has said. We could not, however, extrapolate beyond what He has said to speculate about the implications of what He has said with equal surety, because He may not (for good reason) have given us all the facts. Clearly some information in the hands of humans would be a very bad thing. God's obscuring certain types of knowledge (like the means to build certain types of weapons) may be the only things that allow humans to survive with free will and curiosity.

How does this relate to the Gosse problem? The critic might respond that the "apparent histories" are deceptions in the first sense. This is incorrect, however. There is no necessary connection between the appearance of history and actual history. God did not say that the world was created at time t1-n. The world simply appears to be that way. The Gosse argument or a modified "brain in a vat" type argument proves that apparent history is inadequate to make this sort of determination without philosophical presuppositions to help choose which of the possible worlds we will choose to believe is actual. In the case of a "Gosse history", the universe obscures the truth, therefore God "deceives" in the second sense.

How serious would the results of such an omphalos deception be? Schadewald says of a Christian God who creates with the appearance of history, "He creates an elaborate trap and then tortures the victims. . . who fall into it." Schadewald seems to believe that the Morris-Gosse God damns those who are mistaken about origins.

This is wrong, however. Christians do not believe that one's views about origins damn a person. I have already pointed out that Christians differ amongst themselves on this issue. The matter of origins alone will not damn a person. The issues of the time of creation do not have eternal ramifications, though they may have great temporal importance.

What could God's purpose be in obscuring this information? I can think of two possible motives. One must be careful, however, in this sort of speculation and acknowledge that though one can think of possible reasons for God's actions (or even probable ones), there is no means of actually determining if they are the real ones. It is adequate for our purposes, however, to demonstrate that there are fairly plausible motives for God's deception, even from a limited human point of view.

First, one must view the creation event from God's point of view. Up to the moment when God introduced free will agents into the universe, the actions of the universe were just those actions which God wills. There is, therefore, nothing of interest to the Divine Mind that occurs in the universe before the introduction of persons into the cosmic equation. (This, of course, assumes a Gosse-Morris theology.) There would be no reason for God to actualize pre-Adamic history, because it would be a fully determined path until the first free will agent's appearance. The universe could be created at the moment of human history as if the preceding natural history had occurred, because no random or "unforeseen" events took place in it. From God's point of view, creation with appearance of age is economic.

This would not "allow" God to dispense with creation altogether, however. Once a free will agent was introduced into the cosmos (Adam), actual history becomes a necessity. God could not "predict" the outcome of the Adamic struggle with sin.

Second, from a human point of view our lack of total knowledge about origins may help to preserve our free will. If we knew in some strong sense that creationism was true, then only the utterly irrational could choose to reject God. We would become slaves to our knowledge. Since the Gosse-Morris God wants rational beings who freely choose to love him and, in the words of Augustine, pursue a "faith in search of understanding" some uncertainty in the area of origins might be necessary. On the other hand, even with the "apparent age of the earth" accepted as an actual age, it is still possible to come to a "saving faith." Examples were cited earlier. Therefore, this deception (in the second sense) preserves our free will and provides God economy of action without necessarily increasing the chances that humankind will reject God [18].

What am I arguing? I am suggesting deception by the Morris-Gosse God need not be inconsistent with His being all good. The God of the creationists could deceive, in the second sense, for our good. It is possible to think of some fairly plausible reasons why He would want to do so. There is no logical contradiction between an omnibenevolent God and a God who creates with apparent history.

This is different, of course, from the notion that God could just tell humans any useful lie for their own good. God must act to protect his ignorant children, but He must do so in as honest a manner as possible. He could not, for example, say that a Flood had happened when no such event took place. What would be the moral purpose served in telling outrageous lies?

The idea that God could deceive (even if limited to a second sense) may shock some theists. I would point out that God has not, even in the Bible, given humankind all the facts. Jesus spoke in parables, by his own admission, to obscure the truth. Unless God were to make humans omniscient it is difficult to see how, with all the data there is in the universe, he could fail to "deceive" (in the second sense). However, it is not necessary to accept the notion of a deceitful God to save the Gosse-Morris God from the charge of "internal inconsistency."

If Gosse and Morris were to reject any notion of God's deceiving (and perhaps there are some theological reasons I have not thought of that will force them to this position), then they still have a potential answer to the critic. The critic suggests that the universe has an apparent history. Gosse has shown that apparent history need not equal actual history. There is now some reason to be skeptical about apparent history. Before Gosse's argument, it was sufficient to accept the best apparent history to rationally determine the actual history. Small bits of contrary data could be discarded until fit into the general theory, because there was no good reason to doubt the general picture. Following Gosse, every piece of data that challenges the general apparent age of the universe should generate "Gossean skepticism" about the relationship between apparent and actual history. Conventional acceptance of the relationship between apparent history and actual history has ceased to be a matter of data but a matter of philosophy. Even all the data speaking for one age would guarantee nothing, though it might make one data more interesting on some philosophic grounds. On the other hand, the smallest bit of hard data pointing away from that data should now make the observer ask very hard questions indeed.

The person who does not know of the Gosse argument picks the view with the most evidence. He has no reason to think the evidence could fail to say what it seems to say. Knowing (and accepting) the Gosse argument, however, would cause the investigator to examine the evidence for the age of the Earth carefully. Some small amount of irrefutable evidence for a "young earth", combined with some powerful philosophic or religious reasons for accepting such a "Gosse history" would now seem sufficient to allow the rational person to decide in favor of some model other than that suggested by the majority of "apparent history." But what does all of this have to do with the argument about God's putative deception in creating the cosmos with an omphalos?

God has not deceived us if the question is in a muddle. Given the Gosse constraint, anything less than a universal witness for one date by all the physical data would seem to leave God clear of the charge of deception. The creationist can, if he can point to non-empirical reasons to believe in a young earth and some scientific evidence for a young Earth argue that God has left the notion equivocal at worst. It is a pretty sorry deception if the planner (despite his intention to deceive and his omnipotence) leaves traces of his deception in the field of operations. Robert Gentry's work with polonium halos, if it had been successful, would have provided exactly the sort of evidence I am talking about here. In fact, it seems that Gentry's work has failed to do what he hoped, but it does provide us a model of what such evidence might look like [19]. In other words, God does not deceive if:

- (1) He personally speaks to humankind and tells them roughly when He created the cosmos.
- (2) He leaves powerful non-scientific reasons for accepting the message of 1.
- (3) He leaves some traces of actual age in addition to the tricky omphalos in the physical world.
- (4) There are plausible reasons that can be given for his creation of the world with an omphalos.

The creationist would have to argue for 1 on philosophic grounds. She would also have to reach 2 by the same methodology. It would be the job of the creationist scientist to search for 3. The creationist theologian would carry on 4. This is a research program of some magnitude. Earlier I suggested some ways several of these problems might be resolved. In any case, short of accepting some notion of a deceptive God, this would be the task before creationists.

In taking up this task, let me briefly suggest an approach to science suggested by the Gosse argument. Creationists wishing to make use of Gosse will also have this general line of reasoning open to them. Using language like that used by W.V. Quine in Word and Object in dealing with issues of philosophy of language, let me suggest that creationists begin to think of cosmological theories as being empirically underdetermined [6, p.26-30]. It seems rational to expect, given successful arguments like the Gosse argument, that two equally explanatory theories of the universe that were logically incompatible might be possible. Such theories might, for example, both equally explain the history of the world. One would postulate an ancient history and the other a recent Gossean history. Both would be logically incompatible. Only one could be right (though of course, neither might be right.) They could, therefore, co-exist forever. Neither could harm the other.

Let me stress that the fact that this construction of an alternative cosmological theory might be possible does not mean that it has been done (it has not), nor even that it can be done in a manner that would please a Morris-Gosse creationist. It might be that in some given area of science that only one theory can be constructed to answer all

the data well. We simply do not know. However, it does give creationists some bare hope for their project without laboring under the necessity of falsifying evolution. One need not, I am suggesting, show evolution to be false in order to allow creationism to thrive. In fact, given the possibility that two logically incompatible theories could thrive simultaneously such an attempt is probably a waste of time. It is not, of course, a waste of time to show that modern evolutionary theory is underdetermined. Phillip Johnson has done an excellent job of doing this in his work [Darwin on Trial](#). The important thing is to see if creationism can explain the data of science. At this point, I am sure that with sufficient accommodation of beliefs on the part of its followers that the theory of evolution will do well. If held to with sufficient tenacity almost any large scale theory can be saved, even if it is at great epistemological cost.

CONCLUSION

In summary then, we have seen that none of the attacks on the Gosse argument attempt to refute the logic of the argument. The critics only assert that the argument does not help Gosse-Morris style creationists. It does not help Gosse-Morris creationists as much as they might have hoped. It does, however, show that "appearance of history" does not immediately falsify creationism. It also sets up a research program for creationists in many fields. Gosse has provided creationists with a valuable tool. How could Gosse be defeated? It appears to me that only if it is possible to strongly refute general skeptical arguments (of which I believe the Gosse argument is a type), could one fully refute the Gosse claims. Since creationists should only use the Gosse argument to open up the possibility of their view, and since "refutations" this strong of skeptical views are hard to come by, I believe the Gosse argument will remain valuable to creationists for years to come.

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REFERENCES

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- [2] Bird, W.R., [The Origin of the Species Revisited](#), Philosophical Library, New York, NY, 1989, page 324.
- [3] The best book on this issue I have read that argues that creationism is science is [Christianity and the Nature of Science](#) by J.P. Moreland. Langdon Gilkey deals with several related issues in a readable manner (with the opposite conclusion) in the second half of his [Creationism on Trial](#).
- [4] Morris, Henry, [The Biblical Basis for Modern Science](#), Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1984, p. 175.
- [5] For a discussion of the "brain in the vat" problem see John L. Pollock, [Contemporary Theories of Knowledge](#). He attempts to refute skepticism about our past. My point is not that the atheist must believe he is a brain in a vat, but that it is always going to be possible that he is one. This is not much, but it means that history and existence are not logically tied to each other.
- [6] Quine, W.V. [World and Object](#), M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA, 1960, p. 26-30. Let me stress that Quine is dealing with philosophy of language and translation. The language employed here is "Quine-like." I doubt Quine would endorse such a broad application of his views here. I am confident he would reject any favorable implications for creationism.
- [7] It is important to note that not all Christians would accept this interpretation of the Bible. Many conservative Christians would reject it. See the excellent books [The Fourth Day](#) by Van Till and [The Galileo Connection](#) by Hummel for examples.
- [8] "A being x is omnipotent in a world W at a time t = df in W it is true both that (i) for every state of affairs A, if it is possible that both S(W,t) obtains and that x strongly actualizes A at t, then at t x can strongly actualize A, and (ii) there is some state of affairs which x can strongly actualize at t."

This definition of omnipotence, which I think to be the best available, is taken from:

Edward R. Wierenga, [The Nature of God](#), Cornell University Press, Ithica, NY, 1989, p. 25.

- [9] It would be best if the reader understood my comments to refer to a "Gosse-like" argument. For the sake of brevity, I will label all such "Gosse-like" arguments as those of Gosse. I am not attempting to replicate the actual historic argument advanced by Gosse, but to deal with a modern argument often traced to him.
- [10] I am using the term "creationist" to refer to persons who believe in an Earth that is comparatively young, are not evolutionists, and believe in a world wide flood. I am aware that this is an imprecise characterization and that some persons label themselves "creationists" who do not hold any of these positions. I do believe, however, that the term is one that is in popular usage and is precise enough to at least label a small group of persons who would be comfortable with these notions.
- [11] In fact, I know of no creationist book that deals with the problem in a respectable manner. However, I have not read all creationist books and so limit my claim to the works cited later in this paper. I take these works to be standard expositions of the "orthodox" creationism of the sixties, seventies, and eighties.
- [12] This object O could be a person, desk, or the universe itself.
- [13] An object x has the appearance of history in a world W at a time t =df if x has any feature y that suggests the existence of x at t-n in W.
- [14] The result of t1-n would be dependent on whatever the theist held the date of creation to be and whatever scientists determined the appearance of history to be in the universe. This argument is unaffected by any actual figure suggested by either camp.
- [15] This objection was made in an unpublished letter to the author by the erudite anti-creationist Robert J. Schadewald.
- [16] Robert Schadewald let me read an unpublished paper reacting to this passage in Morris. He does an excellent job debunking this response to the Gossean critics. To be fair to Morris, it is important to note that he advances other defenses of Gosse. I would like to express my general appreciation for the work of Henry Morris, a true polymath, whose own writings continue to inspire my work.
- [17] Since this objection applies to only the Gosse-Morris god, I will assume this Christian god for the rest of the paper as being the only god under discussion.
- [18] If the Gosse argument holds, then a person would have to have more than the apparent history of the Earth in order to reject the Biblical God. If no rational reasons can be found for selecting the Gosse-Morris theology that overcomes the simplicity of merely accepting apparent history as fact, then one should reject the Gosse-Morris theology.
- [19] I am not a scientist so I cannot judge Gentry's work. I am basing my opinion on creationists and noncreationists whose opinions I trust. Of course if Gentry's work and conclusions turn out to be good, then this is all the better for creationists.