

THE NATURAL THEOLOGY OF JOHN WILKINS

Key words: John Wilkins, Selenites, physico-theology, theodicy

Schlüsselwörter: John Wilkins, Seleniten, Physikotheologie, Theodizee

Słowa kluczowe: John Wilkins, selenici, fizyko-teologia, teodycea

John Wilkins (1614-1672) was an Anglican clergyman and a naturalist. He was educated at Oxford, where he received his MA in 1634. In 1637, he was ordained as a minister. In 1648, he became the warden of Wadham College in Oxford, and in 1659, master of Trinity College in Cambridge. In 1660, he was one of the founders of the Royal Society. In 1668, he became bishop of Chester¹.

THE SELENITES

The seventeenth century started with the discovery of the microscope and the telescope, thereby allowing for the investigation of nature at the micro and the macro levels. The discoveries made in this investigation were very interesting in their own right but their impact on theology and on the interpretation of the Scriptures was also significant. The emerging science was used by religious doubters and sceptics against religion, but it also became a tool to strengthen religious beliefs. In that respect, the relationship between science and religion was a universal concern in a world where most people were sincere religious believers in spite of the fractured denominational landscape in Europe at that time. Early on in his career, at the age of 24, Wilkins wrote a treatise about the moon in which he was interested in whether the moon was inhabited.

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¹ E.J. Bowen, H. Hartley, *The Right Reverend John Wilkins, F.R.S. (1614-1672)*, Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London 15(1960), pp. 47-56.

According to observations made at that time by other scholars, the moon is a solid, compact, and opaque body (NW 57).² It emits no light (63), and has an atmosphere (137). The spots on the moon represent seas and bright parts represent lands (101). There are mountains, valleys, and plains on the moon (114). Very cautiously, Wilkins suggested that it may be inhabited, “since providence hath some special end in all works, certainly then these mountains were not produced in vain, and what more probable there should be, than to make that place convenient for habitation” (136-137). Why would God create the moon with all its conveniences if there were no inhabitants on it (188)? That is, the conclusion is drawn both from observation and from theological conviction: the makeup of the moon is not unlike the earth’s, and thus, the moon should be inhabitable as much as the earth is. And since the moon, like all of nature, was created by God, which Wilkins considered to be obvious, why would God create a potentially inhabitable celestial body if there were no inhabitants there? It is thus physically and theologically probable that the moon is inhabited, but it is uncertain what kind of inhabitants these would be (185) and Wilkins dared say nothing specific about these Selenites (202). However, switching to theology, he stated that there is a big difference between humans and angels; it is possible there are inhabitants on other planets who are of an in-between nature. “’Tis not improbable that God might create some of all kinds, that so he might completely glorify himself in the works of his Power and Wisdom” (190) – meaning that the Selenites may be somewhere in this spectrum between humans and angels.

Not quite modestly, Wilkins put himself next to Columbus and stated that Columbus had a problem to convince anyone about the possibility of discovering a new land, so he might have faced a similar problem with his treatise on the moon. “It hath always been the unhappiness of new truths in Philosophy” which were derided (NW 3) since his views include “so much strangeness, so much contradiction to the general consent of other”; however, accepted truths were once ridiculed (4, 16) and also absurd views have been often accepted (5, 15-16). Wilkins admitted that he was not entirely original in the views expressed in his treatise referring to Plutarch, Galileo, and Kepler (19),³ apparently referring to Galileo’s short scholarly treatise *Sidereus nuncius* (1610) and Kepler’s science fiction novel that includes some scholarly material, *Somnium* (1608, published in 1634), but, admittedly, Wilkins was at the forefront of the hypothesis concerning the existence of the Selenites.⁴

² The following reference to Wilkins’ books are used:

NP – *A discourse concerning a new planet, tending to prove, that ’tis probable our Earth is one of the planets*, London: R. H[odgkinson] 1640.

NW – *The discovery of a new world, or, A discourse tending to prove, that ’tis probable there may be another habitable world in the Moone*, London: John Maynard 1640; this is the third and extended edition of *The discovery of a world in the Moone*, published twice in 1638.

P – *Of the principles and duties of natural religion*, London: R[ichard] Chiswell 1710⁶ [1675].

Pr – *A discourse concerning the beauty of Providence*, London: A.M. 1672⁴ [1649].

S – *Sermons*, London: R[ichard] Chiswell 1701² [1682].

³ He also adds, “with some others,” among whom almost certainly Lucian should be included, whose name he also mentions (81).

⁴ Incidentally, his book also “makes it possible to propagate and make accessible to the non-Latinist English public recent astronomical theories”: C. Bouyre, *Vivre et Aller sur la Lune en 1640? Les sciences du vivant dans le discours sur la pluralité des Mondes, à partir de l’œuvre de John*

Religious consequences of this view could hardly be avoided. True, Moses spoke about only one world (NW 28), but he wrote only about things obvious to the senses, and thus, as Aquinas noted, he did not write about air. Also, as observed by Jerome, the creation of angels is not described in the Bible, either (34). Mersenne said that the idea of the many worlds is not heretical since it does not contradict the Scripture (39). Moreover, the idea of an inhabited moon does not “derogate from the divine Wisdom,” but advances it showing “a compendium of providence” in that the moon is an inhabited planet and at the same time it serves the earth and is the adornment of nature (38). Also, “’tis besides the scope of the old Testament or in the new, to discover any thing unto us concerning the secrets of Philosophy” (32). The Bible includes information that is necessary for salvation; it does not include all the information about nature, the information that should be provided by natural philosophy.

COPERNICANISM

In his *New planet*, that appeared the same year as the third edition of his book about the moon, Wilkins cast his view on the universe as a whole, in particular, on the Solar System, with an underlying idea of defending the Copernican system (NP To the reader [3]). There is now, he said, hardly anyone of note who does not follow Copernicus (18). However, the opinion of Copernicus was strictly forbidden in those times (26). This opinion was forbidden on Scriptural grounds and it was also rejected on physical grounds. However, no place in the Scripture “being rightly understood” suggests the diurnal motion of the sun. The Scripture was intended “for a rule of our Faith and Obedience,” not as an authority in the matter of “natural truths as are to be found out by our own industry and experience.” God left such research to people to divert them from their lusts and sinful inclinations (28-29). Biblical language accommodates common opinions. For example, if it were said that the earth should stand still, hardly anyone would understand it (31). When the Bible speaks about the sun rising in the morning and going down in the evening, it speaks about “the false appearance of thing” (38). The Joshua miracle is also described in terms of appearances as “conceived in common opinion,” not according to the true nature of the event (38). By this, the Bible accommodates its language “unto the error of our conceits” speaking about various events “as they appear unto us” (48). When the Bible says that the moon will blush, that the sun will be ashamed, and that the moon and the sun will turn into blood, this is because these phenomena will appear to people that way, not that they are such in themselves (72). Clinging to the literal meaning of the Biblical

*Wilkins: “The discovery of a new world” (1640), “Bulletin d’Histoire et d’épistémologie des Sciences de la vie” 21(2014), p. 37. Through the many physical and technological details contained in his book, “Wilkins was remarkable as both a visionary and a popularizer of the early scientific revolution in England”: A. Chapman, ‘A World in the Moon’: John Wilkins and his lunar voyage of 1640, “Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society” 32(1991), p. 130. Moreover, confident that “’tis possible for some of our posteritie to find out a conveyance to this other world” (p. 203), that is, confident that the age of space travel is imminent, Wilkins “breathes the confidence of the age of conquest”: K.S. Guthke, *The last frontier. Imagining Other Worlds from the Copernican Revolution to Modern Science Fiction*, transl. H. Atkins, Ithaca 1990. p. 150.*

statements may lead to outright errors, e.g., maintaining that the moon is larger than any star, since the sun and the moon are called two great lights (80). The Scripture “in its proper construction” nowhere affirms the immobility of the earth (89). When it says that the world is established and cannot be moved (Ps. 93:1, 96:10), it is a statement about the world in general, not just the earth, whereby it would also speak about the immobility of the heavens (95, 98). When it says that God laid the foundations of the earth that should not be ever moved (Ps. 104:5) (98), this should be understood metaphorically, since the earth lacks a foundation like a building, because, as stated elsewhere, it is suspended upon nothing (Job 26:7) (99). All these expressions about the foundation of the earth and of heaven did not refer to the immovability of heaven and earth, but were intended to show the power and wisdom of God who placed everything in its proper place (103).

Human knowledge is limited, and we do not know why planets and stars have been placed at their particular distance from the Earth (NP 130). The Scripture says that they were made for humans, but this may not be the only reason. There may be other inhabitants for whom the stars would be more useful (131).

It is more likely that the earth moves rather than the sun or the heavens. Through the earth’s motion, the “inconceivable, unnatural swiftness” of the stars would not be needed (NP 189). At this speed, a bird would fly seven times around the world during one prayer (191). True, God could accomplish it, but when trying philosophically and scientifically to explain this speed, a person should not invoke the absolute power of God, but rather say “what according to the usual way of Providence, is most likely to be done” (193).

Using angels to move celestial bodies is superfluous and improbable (NP 212). The earth spins “by some motive Power of its own, that may be intrinsicall (sic) unto it” (214). However, “no man can find out the Works of God, from the beginning to the end” (Eccl. 3:11). A perfect comprehension of God’s creation is beyond human reach (215). God did it that way so that all human curiosity will only be satisfied in the afterlife. This is because no natural appetite is in vain (216).

Why should people trouble themselves with the investigation of nature if the prospect of gaining perfect knowledge in this world is ruled out? The study of nature and science in general makes people better human beings and expands their reason (NP 235). Astronomy is preferable over other sciences because its object is the entire world (236) and its demonstrations “are as infallible as truth itself” (237). Astronomy is most useful since “it proves a God and a Providence, and incites our hearts to a greater admiration and fear of his omnipotence” (237-238) and the admiration grows with the continued investigation of the world (239). This knowledge proves the existence of God making people religious, but it also confirms the truth of the Scriptures. This may also stir people to live in accordance with the divine nature of their souls (240). When people see the immensity of the heavens and how small the earth is, they will not be so eager to limit their thoughts and desires to earthly things (cf. 243).

The theological reflection is fairly limited in the book about the moon, and it acquires much greater prominence in the *New planet*. In the first book, theological reflections are given to defend the validity of the possible existence of the Selenites based on physical and astronomical investigations. In the second book, the astronomical investigations are used also to enrich theology and the religious outlook of

people. This is a spark of physico-theology, which became the leading theology in the second half of the seventeenth century and even more so in the eighteenth century. It also made a much stronger appearance in the last book of Wilkins which was published posthumously.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

In later works, Wilkins pursued his scholarly and theological interests separately. He published in 1641 his *Mercury, or the secret and swift messenger*, a cryptography book, and in 1648, *Mathematical Magick*. In spite of the title, this is a book on physics, in particular, on mechanics, and on technology presenting various devices from springs and levers to submarines and flying machines. The book had a fourth edition in 1691. In 1668, he published *An essay towards a real character, and a philosophical language*, a proposal of a universal language, Esperanto of sorts, for naturalists.⁵

On the other hand, he published in 1653 the *Ecclesiastes, or, a discourse concerning the gift of preaching*, with its eighth edition appearing in 1704. It was a kind of manual on preaching that included a long bibliography. There were also eighteen sermons published posthumously. Although titled *Sermons* and apparently delivered as such, these are more like lectures concerning the interpretation of various verses. These sermons are filled with detailed classifications and pedantic definitions of various terms. For example, when discussing the verse, “Two are better than one” (Eccl. 4:6) (S 263), Wilkins stated that the words “one” and “many” can be interpreted both negatively and positively, explaining what that means (265), which is followed by the specification of three things important for the comfort of life: the rectifying of judgment, the regulation of passions, and the assistance in labours. In the rectification of judgment there are two defects: confusion and error (268). For the regulation of passions, several passions can be distinguished, violent: anger, fear, grief, and kindly: love, hope, and joy (272), followed by a discussion of all these terms is provided, and the sermon is continued in this vein. There is a great deal of scholarly showmanship. Sermons should be directed to the heart, but it is doubtful if anyone was spiritually stirred when listening to the explanations of the words in the verse, “Let your moderation be known unto all” (Phil. 4:5): “Concerning the virtue enjoined, *your Moderation*, τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν. In the Original ’tis an *Adjective* put *Substantively*, wherein there is a peculiar elegance and *Emphasis*. The *Syriac* and *Arabic* render it *mansuetudo*, meekness. The *Vulgar*, *Arias Montanus*, and others, *modestia*, modesty, a composedness of life and manners. The *Aethiopic*, *Autoritas vestra*, your Authority; for which there seems to be very little ground in the signification of the word,” etc. (S 392).

As to other theological works, in 1649, Wilkins published *A discourse concerning the beauty of Providence*, with the fifth edition in 1677. In 1653, he published

⁵ The book includes “an alphabetical dictionary of English words, with their equivalents in what may be called, without irreverence, Wilkinese”: P.A. Wright Henderson, *The Life and times of John Wilkins*, Edinburgh 1910, p. 85. As to his corpus of science books, it “may perhaps not unfairly be classed among the curiosities of the history of thought”: D. Stimson, *Dr. Wilkins and the Royal Society*, “The Journal of Modern History” 3(1931), p. 563.

A discourse concerning the gift of prayer, with the eighth edition coming out in 1704. However, his main theological work was a book on natural theology published posthumously by his friend John Tillotson, with its ninth edition appearing in 1734.

In this book, Wilkins tried to systematize natural theology *more geometrico* by setting a number of definitions, postulates, and axioms to be used to arrive at certain consequences. For example, one postulate says that “Every thing is endowed with such a natural Principle, whereby it is necessarily inclined to promote its own preservation and well-being.” That which can promote (P 12) this end is good, what hinders it, is evil, with many degrees in-between (13). This leads to proposing two axioms: 5. a present good can be reasonably abandoned in favour of the future greater good (14); 6. a present evil may be endured to avoid the future greater evil (16), and then to another set of axioms, including: 1. that which is morally good should be desired, what is evil should be avoided (20); 3. moral good is to be preferred over natural good; 4. the present natural good can be abandoned in favour of the future moral good; 5. the present natural evil should be endured to avoid future moral evil (21).

The core of natural theology lies in the proofs of the existence of God. Wilkins discussed four such proofs that he considered most convincing: 1. the argument from the universal consent (P 40); 2. The origin of the world; 3. The excellent contrivance of the world; 4. God’s governance of the world (41).

The proof from the universal consent was found more and more convincing at the age of worldwide trade and journeys. Various reports indicated that some form of religion could be found in each part of the world. There were some rare exceptions of “sottish and grossly ignorant” peoples who did not have any belief in God (45), but this was what they are, exceptions of peoples who did not reach a sufficient level of rationality proper to humankind, just as blindness is a rare affliction that does not allow people to recognize colours (47).

The existence of the world is used in the second proof, or rather its finite existence which requires the existence of the Creator since, as generally agreed, nothing comes from nothing (P 75). There are some people claiming that the world exists from eternity, but their contention is unsustainable. If the world were eternal, there should be some memorials of old ages. However, arts and sciences are not older than a thousand years (71); could humanity have lived without the benefits of arts and sciences for an infinity of time (72)? Also, the eternally existing world would be overpopulated, unless there were extraordinary devastations of mankind occurring regularly (73); could such regularity be assured by accident? Could natural devastations like Noah’s flood occur regularly by natural means? To avoid overpopulation, they would have to happen once in 10 to 20 thousand years with at least one family surviving (74). How could anyone have survived at all after a universal flood? Incidentally, the explanation offered by the atomists concerning the eternity of the world is so “extravagant and irrational” that it is not even worthy of discussion (77). Moreover, atheists who accuse believers of credulity are themselves most credulous, believing in the eternity of the world or its chance creation “by a casual Concourse of Atoms” (P 98).

The third proof is “from that *excellent Contrivance* which there is in all natural things. Both with respect to that Elegance and Beauty which they have in themselves separately considered, and that regular Order and Subserviency wherein they stand towards one another; together with the exact fitness and propriety, for the several

purposes for which they are designed. From all which it may be inferred, that these are the productions of some Wise Agent” (P 78). The change of seasons, the growth of plants, the generation of animals, and the formation of nations are such examples (79). The microscope shows the “accurate Order and Symmetry in the Frame of the most minute Creatures, a *Louse* or a *Mite*”, whereas the sharpest needle is blunt and rough under the microscope (80). Consider the remarkable makeup of the human body with all parts harmoniously fitted together and serving their purpose (81). Similarly, with other creatures. To think that all these bodies have been so organized “without the contrivance of some wise Agent, must needs be Irrational in the highest degree.” Consider also the mental abilities of human beings, such as judgment and choice (82). No blind chance or blind necessity could have endowed humans with these faculties. Even assuming that matter and its motion are eternal, matter by itself could not accomplish any of this (83). It must have been an Intelligent Eternal Being, God (84).

Looking at nature – its wondrous complexity and harmony on the large and the microscopic scales – characterizes physico-theology that started in the mid-seventeenth century to overshadow other kinds of proof of the existence of God for about a century and a half. This kind of proof was an ideal combination for the many authors of those times, namely naturalist research and theology, one supporting another: the more detailed investigations of nature were, the greater admiration it incited for the wisdom and power of God. Likewise, the stronger someone’s faith, the more it motivated people to the investigation of nature as the creation of God.⁶

The physico-theological approach was more convincing than the witnessing of miracles. After all, as the Biblical record indicates, the Jews rebelled against God despite witnessing many miracles (P 93), and the many miracles performed by Jesus did not convince everyone (94).

Wilkins’ fourth proof is from the divine governance of the world or divine providence. This is, in a way, an extension of the previous physico-theological proof: there is a wise order in the universe, where “every particular event is most seasonable in that time which God appoints”; thus, there is no reason to complain about anything that happens (Pr 4). Every particular event is most beautiful in the time that Providence assigned it (15). “There is nothing so *great*, but is under his *power*; nothing so little, but is within his *care*. Those actions and events that seem unto us most *free*, *casual*, *inconsiderable*, are all of them ordered by his providence” (34).

The reference to God’s providence almost instantly leads to the problem of theodicy: if a good God has control over the universe, why are there so many unendurable elements in it? Wilkins addressed the problem in the way it was almost always done before him and will be done after him by reference to human limitations. Things may not appear beautiful to us since they are obscure or too small. Only under the microscope can we see “gildings and embroideries” of microorganisms (Pr 49). People do not see “the whole frame of things” (52). What is evil in man’s execution is beautiful by God’s appointment (56). In all, “there is some great design to be accomplished” (66).

⁶ In that respect, Wilkins’ advocacy of separation of theology from philosophical and naturalistic pursuits “did not imply the removal of God from the sphere of natural philosophy. Rather, the liberty to philosophize contributed to glorifying the Creator by furthering insight into his designs of the world”: M. Feingold, *The young John Wilkins and the debate over Copernicanism*, in: *John Wilkins (1614-1672): new essays*, ed. W. Poole, Leiden 2017, p. 26.

In creation, everything has a peculiar beauty proper to its station. In respect to the universe, toads and serpents are “regular and comely parts” (68). Every day has its proper evil as well as its proper advantage (84). “The very dregs of time, if we endeavour to make a right use of them, may be redeemed into opportunity” (84-85). “Nothing befalls us by chance. All things are ordered by the deliberate counsel and fore-knowledge of God” (117).⁷ In fact, “The most sagacious man is not able to find out any blot or error in this great volume of the world, as if any thing in it had been an imperfect Essay at the first, such as afterwards stood in need of mending But *all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation*” (P 78).⁸

The fourth proof seems to be of rather limited validity since it appears to presuppose God’s providence rather than to prove it. Later physico-theologians were much more careful in this respect, pointing to elements of nature and human history that indicate the presence of divine care. Wilkins spelled out this proof rather unconvincingly.

In any event, the entire physico-theological approach as envisioned by Wilkins could speak to the existence of God, His wisdom, and causality, but not much more. It appears that as to the being of God, Wilkins spoke more in the spirit of ontological proof than in the spirit of physico-theology by relying primarily on the concept of God.

THE BEING OF GOD

The most general notion of God is that He is the first cause and a Being of all possible perfection (P 102). Thus, whatever positive attribute can be envisioned, it can be ascribed to God. Simplicity belongs to the natural notion of God (104). God is not composed, but is a simple being since the components have to precede the whole and nothing precedes God (105). God is spirit, not subject to the laws of matter (106); spirituality is a perfection and thus should be ascribed to God; materiality would conflict with God’s immensity, wisdom, and liberty (107). Unity belongs to the notion of God (108). God is one, since a plurality of gods is unnecessary and thus improbable; God has no limits, and is thus infinite (113); therefore, polytheism is absurd; there cannot be two infinite Gods, since that would require several sets of perfections which would be inconsistent with an obvious concept of God as the being of all possible perfections and sharing perfections would undermine divine superiority (114). God is immutable since any change is for the better or for the worse, but a wise being would hardly change for the worse, and a perfect being could not change for the better (116). It is necessary to believe that God is everywhere in respect to His power and providence, so He is in every place (118); thus, God must be infinite (119); God is also infinite in respect to duration, that is, He is eternal (120), and in this way, He can be the first cause. Infinity characterizes all God’s attributes and it would be “a great abatement” to all divine perfections if they were not infinite (122). God’s knowledge extends to essences of things, is clear and distinct, infallible, easy (125), all-encompassing, and infinite (126). God is providential since rejecting providence would compromise His

⁷ The acceptance of such providence can make “men cheerful and thankful in times of mercy; in times of suffering it should make them patient and submissive”: B.J. Shapiro, *John Wilkins, 1614-1672, an intellectual biography*, Berkeley 1969, p. 70.

⁸ Curiously, Wilkins referred here to the words of scoffers quoted in 2 Peter 3:4.

other attributes (133), in which way the fourth proof of the existence of God becomes circular. God is good: "It is so plain, so fundamental a Notion, that Goodness must belong to God, that I know not how to go about the proof of it. 'Tis the brightest Ray of the Deity, the first and clearest Notion we have of God," and it is the foundation of worship (138). All things were created by God, so, God's power is limited by nothing; it is infinite (146).

This knowledge of the attributes of God is not only of theoretical interest, but it also has very practical consequences – in this life and the next.

God's attributes should dispose people to worship Him and trust in Him (P 177). Every rational man has to have "some chief scope or end" (307) and for rational beings this end must be "a communion with, and a conformity to the Supreme Being; and consequently, in being religious" (310); stronger yet, an ultimate end of all human actions should be the glory of God and the main happiness is in the enjoyment of God (S 7). Therefore, following the divine moral law should be the way of life for every person, all the more so because the law is written in every person's heart by nature (229). And since there is a natural desire for happiness and perfection, and no natural desire is in vain, and since it is impossible to attain happiness in this life (159), it is highly credible that there is another life where happiness is possible (160). Therefore, godliness in this life should assure happiness not only in this life but also in the next. All of this is succinctly summarized in a version of Pascal's wager: if God does not exist and people believe in Him, then the error will die with them and they will be accountable to no one. If He does exist and people deny His existence (P 97), then, "as this is the highest Provocation that any Man can be guilty of, so shall it be punished with the sorest Vengeance" (98).⁹

Wilkins' natural theology relies on rational deliberations concerning concepts and principles that are assumed to be natural, and hence inborn, but also to an appreciable extent on the observation of nature, indicating the use of the budding physico-theology. This was a way of combining emerging scientific research with theology, and it became the leading theological paradigm for the coming century and a half.

THE NATURAL THEOLOGY OF JOHN WILKINS

SUMMARY

As a clergyman and naturalist, John Wilkins wanted in the spirit of the time to enlist science in the cause of emerging physico-theology. He discussed naturalist problems concerning the moon and the theological possibility of the existence of its inhabitants including the problem of interpreting some Biblical statements. He also discussed various proofs of the existence of God, which included physico-theological proof from the beauty, complexity, and orderliness of the world. However, such proofs did not allow him to say much about the attributes of God, the presentation of which he mainly based on the concept of God.

⁹ John Ray quoted this wager at the conclusion of his *The wisdom of God*, London 1691.

DIE NATÜRLICHE THEOLOGIE VON JOHN WILKINS

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Als Geistlicher und Naturforscher wollte John Wilkins im Geiste seiner Zeit die Wissenschaft für die aufkommende Physikotheologie gewinnen. Er diskutierte naturalistische Probleme rund um den Mond und die theologische Möglichkeit der Existenz seiner Bewohner, einschließlich der Frage der Interpretation einiger biblischer Aussagen. Er diskutierte auch verschiedene Beweise für die Existenz Gottes, darunter auch physikotheologische Beweise aus der Schönheit, Komplexität und Ordnung der Welt. Solche Beweise erlaubten es ihm jedoch nicht, viel über die Eigenschaften Gottes zu sagen, deren Darstellung er hauptsächlich auf dem Gottesbegriff basierte.

TEOLOGIA NATURALNA JOHNA WILKINSA

STRESZCZENIE

Jako duchowny i przyrodnik John Wilkins pragnął w duchu czasu użyć osiągnięcia nauki w interesie rodzącej się fizykoteologii. Poruszał problemy przyrodnicze dotyczące Księżyca i teologicznej możliwości istnienia jego mieszkańców, co wiązało się z dyskusją problemu interpretacji niektórych stwierdzeń biblijnych. Omówił także różne dowody na istnienie Boga, m.in. dowód fizyczno-teologiczny wywodzący istnienie Boga z piękna, złożoności i uporządkowania świata. Dowody takie nie pozwoliły mu jednak wiele powiedzieć na temat atrybutów Boga, których przedstawienie oparł głównie na pojęciu Boga.

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