

## The Universe was Caused at the Beginning

This argument says that the universe is limited in that it had a beginning and that its beginning was caused by something beyond the universe. It can be stated this way:

1. The universe had a beginning.
2. Anything that has a beginning must have been caused by something else.
3. Therefore, the universe was caused by something else, and this cause was God.

In order to avoid this conclusion, some people say that the universe is eternal; it never had a beginning—it just always existed. Carl Sagan said, “The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be.” But we have two ways to answer this objection.

First, the scientific evidence strongly supports the idea that the universe had a beginning. The view usually held by those who claim that the universe is eternal, called the steady state theory, leads some to believe that the universe is constantly producing hydrogen atoms from nothing. It would be simpler to believe that God created the universe from nothing.

Also, the consensus of scientists studying the origin of the universe is that it came into being in a sudden and cataclysmic way. This is called the Big Bang theory. The main evidence for the universe having a beginning is the second law of thermodynamics, which says the universe is running out of usable energy. But if it is running down, then it could not be eternal. What is winding down must have been wound up. Other evidence for the Big Bang is that we can still find the radiation from it and see the movement that it caused. Robert Jastrow, founder-director of NASA’s Goddard Institute of Space Studies, has said, “A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist’s pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation.”

But beyond the scientific evidence that shows the universe began, there is a philosophical reason to believe that the world had a starting point. This argument shows that time cannot go back into the past forever. You see it is impossible to pass through an infinite series of moments. You might be able to imagine passing through an infinite number of dimensionless points on a line by moving your finger from one end to the other, but time is not dimensionless or imaginary. It is real and each moment that passes uses up real time that we can’t go back to. It is more like moving your finger across an endless number of books in a library. You would never get to the last book. Even if you thought you had found the last book, there could always be one more added, then another and another.... You can never finish an infinite series of real things.

If the past is infinite (which is another way of saying, “If the universe had always existed without a beginning”), then we could never have passed through time to get to today. If the past is an infinite series of moments, and right now is where that series stops, then we would have passed through an infinite series and that is impossible. If the world never had a beginning, then we could not have reached today. But we have reached today: so time must have begun at a particular point in the past, and today has come at a definite time since then. Therefore, the world is a finite event after all and it needs a cause for its beginning.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M. (1990). *When skeptics ask* (16–17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## Two Kinds of Infinite Series

There are two kinds of infinite series, one is abstract and the other is concrete.

An abstract infinite series is a mathematical infinite. For example, as any mathematician knows, there are an infinite number of points on a line between point A and point B, no matter how short (or long) the line may be. Let's say the points are two bookends about three feet apart. Now, as we all know, while there are an infinite number of abstract mathematical points between the two bookends, nevertheless, we cannot get an infinite number of actual books between them, no matter how thin the pages are! Nor does it matter how many feet of distance we place between the bookends; we still cannot get an infinite number of books there.

So while abstract, mathematical infinite series are possible, actual, concrete infinite series are not.

Now that we have seen that the universe needs a cause of its *beginning*, let's move on to the second form of the argument. This argument shows that the universe needs a cause of its existence *right now*.<sup>2</sup>

## The Universe Needs a Cause for its Continuing Existence

Something is keeping us in existence right now so we don't just disappear. Something has not only caused the world to come into being (Genesis 1:1), but is also continuing and conserving its existence in the present (Colossians 1:17). The world needs both an originating cause and a conserving cause. In a sense, this question is the most basic question that can be asked, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" It can be put this way:

1. *Finite, changing things exist.* For example, me. I would have to exist to deny that I exist; so either way, I must really exist.
2. *Every finite, changing thing must be caused by something else.* If it is limited and it changes, then it cannot be something that exists independently. If it existed independently, or necessarily, then it would have always existed without any kind of change.
3. *There cannot be an infinite regress of these causes.* In other words, you can't go on explaining how this finite thing causes this finite thing, which causes this other finite thing, and on and on, because that really just puts off the explanation indefinitely. It doesn't explain anything. Besides, if we are talking about why finite things are existing right now, then no matter how many finite causes you line up, eventually you will have one that would be both causing its own existence and be an effect of that cause at the same moment. That is nonsense. So no infinite regress can explain why I am existing right now.
4. *Therefore, there must be a first uncaused cause of every finite, changing thing that exists.* This argument shows why there must be a present, conserving cause of the world, but it doesn't tell us very much about what kind of God exists. How do we know that this is really the God of the Bible?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M. (1990). *When skeptics ask* (18). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M. (1990). *When skeptics ask* (18–19). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## Time and Space:

I once read a lecture by Stephen Hawking about Space and Time Warps. It's not that I had extra time on my hands (no pun intended) but because of a comment on my post regarding [Blind Faith or Logical Reasons to Believe God Exists](#). His comment was that the laws of physics break down prior to the Big Bang, so the state of things prior to the singularity is irrelevant because there is no standard for measuring them. It's a great observation and shows he is a well-read person.

In another lecture on the [origin of the universe](#), Hawking says,

*"The General Theory of Relativity and the discovery of the expansion of the universe shattered the old picture of an ever existing and ever lasting universe. Instead, general relativity predicted that the universe, and time itself, would begin in the big bang."*

In the [Space and Time lecture](#), Hawking addresses time travel, technology, wormholes, warped space, and even what I call "Back to the Future" issues. Hawking says:

*We thus have experimental evidence from the bending of light, that space-time is curved, and confirmation from the Casimir effect, that we can warp it in the negative direction. So it might seem possible, that as we advance in science and technology, we might be able to construct a wormhole, or warp space and time in some other way, so as to be able to travel into our past.*

As a fan of the Sci-Fi Channel, the lecture was definitely interesting for me, but the quote above caught my attention... Hawking, who is perhaps the greatest scientific mind in our generation, admits we have only "experimental evidence" in what he addresses.

If laws of physics break down prior to "creation" of the universe as we know it, does not the Bible also claim to reveal the same information? Genesis 1:2 says that prior to the creation singularity the earth was formless and void, which many biblical commentators would translate "chaos." OK, let's leave the Bible out of this since many people do not see it as an authoritative document.

I find myself looking more at the philosophical side of arguments to "prove" God's existence. The argument from creation (the cosmological argument) states that since science and philosophy would indicate the universe had a beginning (therefore not eternal), and for the universe to have a beginning it would have to be caused by something outside of the known universe. Since infinite regress is not possible, the universe must have been caused by an uncaused, always existing, eternal Being (which many people call God).

As far as the Big Bang and life on this planet, the logical first question would be, "Where did the elements that caused the Big Bang come from?" Hawking's lecture on Life in the Universe does not seem to address this concern, rather stating, "The early appearance of life on Earth suggests that there's a good chance of the spontaneous generation of life, in suitable conditions. Maybe there was some simpler form of organisation, which built up DNA." To me it takes more faith to believe that something spontaneously comes from nothing, unless God (the first uncaused cause) is part of the equation.

But as I read Hawking's lecture, I was amazed at the wonder of the universe and how much we cannot even fathom. Then came my next logical question, "Since this universe is so vast and complex, and great thinkers like Hawking can communicate such complex ideas, does this not logically

indicate that there must be a Designer of all of this?" For example, a walk along the beach might reveal interesting sand designs caused by the waves. On the other hand, if I notice "Billy loves Suzie" written in the sand, I must assume this information came from a literate person who is capable of loving someone else. There is complexity in the message that assumes there is an intelligent sender of the message.

So, when we see the complexity of this universe, or even of the human body (made up of nerve cells, brain cells, skin cells, bone cells, all different from each other, yet similar) we must assume there was an intelligent Designer (which we may call God). Evolution does not explain how life moves from a simple cell organism to what we see in the complexity of, let's say, an eye. Can the eye and an optic nerve be the product of time + chance?

The second law of thermodynamics tells us that the amount of usable energy in a closed system (like the universe) is decreasing, which means that everything tends to move from order to disorder, complex to simple, life to death. This is why we have to paint the house every few years; things run down rather than get better over time.

To me, this teleological argument also points to a beginning for the universe. And since the universe has a wonderful and complex order, there must be a Designer that set it in motion at some point in the past. Laws of physics do not need to break down before the Big Bang if we recognize a Creator that not only created matter, but also time and space as well.

Blind Faith? It's a leap of faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), but when one chooses to believe in God after proper research, it is anything but blind.

## Argument from Design

This argument, like others that we will mention briefly, reason from some specific aspect of creation to a Creator who put it there. It argues from design to an intelligent Designer.

1. All designs imply a designer.
2. There is great design in the universe.
3. Therefore, there must be a Great Designer of the universe.

The first premise we know from experience. Anytime we see a complex design, we know by previous experience that it came from the mind of a designer. Watches imply watchmakers; buildings imply architects; paintings imply artists; and coded messages imply an intelligent sender. It is always our expectation because we see it happening over and over. This is another way of stating the principle of causality.

Also, the greater the design, the greater the designer. Beavers make log dams, but they have never constructed anything like Hoover Dam. Likewise, a thousand monkeys sitting at typewriters would never write Hamlet. But Shakespeare did it on the first try. The more complex the design, the greater the intelligence required to produce it.<sup>4</sup>

## Argument from Moral Law

Similar arguments, based on the moral order of the universe rather than the physical order, can be offered. These argue that the cause of the universe must be moral, in addition to being powerful and intelligent.

1. All men are conscious of an objective moral law.
2. Moral laws imply a moral Lawgiver.
3. Therefore, there must be a supreme moral Lawgiver.

This argument did not gain prominence until the early nineteenth century after the writings of Immanuel Kant. Kant insisted that there was no way to have absolute knowledge about God and he rejected all of the traditional arguments for God's existence. He did, however, approve of the moral approach, not as a proof for God's existence, but as a way to show that God is a necessary postulate for moral living. In other words, we can't know that God exists, but we must act like He exists to make sense of morality.

In a sense, this argument also follows the principle of causality. But moral laws are different from the natural laws that we have dealt with before. Moral laws don't *describe what is*; they *prescribe what ought to be*. They are not simply a description of the way men behave, and are not known by observing what men do. If they were, our idea of morality would surely be different. Instead, they tell us what men ought to do, whether they are doing it or not. Thus, any moral "ought" comes from beyond the natural universe. You can't explain it by anything that happens in the universe and it can't be reduced to the things men do in the universe. It transcends the natural order and requires a transcendent cause.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M. (1990). *When skeptics ask* (20). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>5</sup> Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M. (1990). *When skeptics ask* (22–23). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## Argument from Being

A fourth argument attempts to prove that God must exist by definition. It says that once we get an idea of what God is, that idea necessarily involves existence. There are several forms of this argument, but let's just talk about the idea of God as a perfect Being.

1. Whatever perfection can be attributed to the most perfect Being possible (conceivable) *must* be attributed to it (otherwise it would not be the most perfect being possible).
2. Necessary existence is a perfection which can be attributed to the most perfect Being.
3. Therefore, necessary existence must be attributed to the most perfect Being.

To answer the first question, necessary existence means that something exists and cannot not exist. When we say this of God, it means that it is impossible for Him not to exist. This is the most perfect kind of existence because it can't go away.

Now this argument succeeds in showing that our idea of God must include necessary existence; but it fails to show that God actually exists. It shows that we must *think* of God as existing necessarily; but it does not prove that He must necessarily *exist*. This is an equivocation that has confused many people, so don't feel stupid for having trouble with it. The problem is that it only talks about the way we think of God, not whether or not He really exists. It might be restated this way:

1. If God exists, we conceive of Him as a necessary Being.
2. By definition, a necessary Being must exist and cannot not exist.
3. Therefore, if God exists, then He must exist and cannot not exist.<sup>6</sup>

## Anselm's Ontological Argument:

1. By definition, God is a being than which none greater can be conceived.
2. A being that exists in reality is greater than a being that does not exist. (Anything that exists in reality is greater than the mere concept of the same thing).
3. So, if God exists as an idea in the mind but does not exist in reality, then we can imagine something that is greater than God.
4. But we cannot imagine something that is greater than God.
5. So, if God exists in the mind as an idea, then God necessarily exists in reality.
6. God exists in the mind as an idea.
7. Therefore, God necessarily exists in reality.

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<sup>6</sup> Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M. (1990). *When skeptics ask* (24–25). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## What Kind Of God Exists?

If we want to show that God exists and that He is the God of the Bible, then we need to show that all of the things in the arguments mentioned are true. Each one contributes something to our knowledge of God and, taken together, they form a picture that can only fit the one true God.

God Is Powerful: The argument from Creation proves not only that God exists, but that He has power. Only a God with incredible power could create and sustain the whole universe. His energy would have to be greater than all the energy that was ever available in the whole Creation, for He not only caused all things, He holds them together and keeps them in existence and still sustains His own existence. That is more power than we can imagine.

God Is Intelligent: Even Carl Sagan admits that the design of the universe is far beyond anything that man could devise. The argument from design shows us that whatever caused the universe not only had great power, but also great intelligence. God knows things—things that we cannot understand. This opens the possibility for God to know all sorts of other things, but more on that later. For now it is enough to say that God at least knows everything there is to know about the way we think, because He designed our brains.

God Is Moral: The existence of a moral law in the mind of a moral Lawgiver shows us that God is a moral Being. He is neither beyond morality (like some kings think they are) nor beneath morality (like a rock). He is by nature moral. This means that part of what He knows is the difference between right and wrong. But we can take this one step further: He is not only moral; He is good. We know that part of what He created was people, and persons are good, in and of themselves. The fact that persons always expect to be treated better than things shows that. Even someone denying that people have value at least expects you to value his opinion as a person. But whatever creates good things must be good itself (a cause can't give what it hasn't got). So God is not only moral, He is good.

God Is Necessary: The argument from the idea of a necessary being may not prove that God exists, but it sure does tell us a lot about God once we know that He does exist (by the argument from Creation). We said already that necessary existence means that He cannot not exist—so He had no beginning and no end. But it also means that He cannot “come to be” in any other way. He must be *as He is* necessarily. He can't become something new. That removes all change from His being—He is unchanging. And without change, time is not possible, because time is just a way to measure change—so He is eternal (*e* = no, *tern* = time; no-time). In fact, since a necessary being cannot not be, He can have no limits. A limitation means “to not be” in some sense, and that is impossible—so He is infinite. Also, He can't be limited to categories like “here and there,” because unlimited being must be in all places at all times—therefore, He is omnipresent. All of these are attributes that follow just from knowing that He is necessary.

But His necessity also tells us something about His other attributes. Because of His necessity, He can only have whatever He has in a necessary way. That means, as we have seen, without beginning, without change, and without limitation. So while the argument from Creation tells us that He has power, the argument from the idea of a perfect being shows that it is perfect, unlimited power. The argument from design tells us that He is intelligent, but His necessity informs us that His knowledge is uncreated, unchanging, and infinite. The moral order suggests that He is good, but the perfection of His being means that He must be all good in a perfect and unlimited way. Anything that God is He must be in accordance with His nature; so His power, knowledge, and goodness are as perfect as His being.

God Cannot Change: Change can only be essential, like changing from a dog to a horse, or accidental, like changing from a brunette to a blond. Essential changes change what a thing is; accidental ones only

change little details. God can't change His essence because that would mean not existing (remember: His essence is to exist). He can't change any details because everything He's got is wrapped up in His existence. Therefore, God is changeless.

God Is Unique: We have said that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, infinite, uncreated, unchanging, eternal, and omnipresent. But how many beings like that can there be? He is a class of one by definition. If there were two unlimited beings, how could you tell them apart? They have no limits to define where one stops and the other begins—but neither one can “stop” or “begin” anyway. There can only be one infinite Being and no other.

God Is Lord Over Creation: The argument from Creation does more than prove that God exists; it also proves that He is the Creator. There is no way to distinguish two infinite creatures, but God is distinct from the finite world that He has made. The whole point of the argument from Creation is that the universe cannot explain its own existence—that it is not God. The same point can be made if we consider an individual. I exist; but I have no way to account for my existence in myself. It is painfully clear that my being is not necessary—I could cease to exist at any moment and the world would go right on without me. Only by recognizing an infinite Being, a necessary cause for my being—One who gives me being—can I make sense of my existence. And as the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator, He has control over the creation. Not only does God exist, but His creation also exists distinct from Him.

God Is Yahweh: Is this the God of the Bible? At the burning bush, God told Moses His name and said, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14). This signifies that the central characteristic of the God of the Bible is existence. His very nature is existence. Popeye can say, “I am what I am.” But only God can say, “I AM WHO I AM.” He is the “I AM.” The Bible also calls God eternal (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:2), unchanging (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:18), infinite (1 Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1), all-good (Ps. 86:5; Luke 18:19), and all-powerful (Heb. 1:3; Matt. 19:26). Since these beings are the same in all these respects, and there can't be two infinite beings, then this God that the arguments point us to is the God of the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M. (1990). *When skeptics ask* (26–29). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.