God?

A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist

By: William Lane Craig & Walter Sinnott–Armstrong
CHAPTER 1 Five Reasons God Exists (William Lane Craig)


- Therefore, as Cambridge astronomer Fred Hoyle points out, the Big Bang theory requires the creation of the universe from nothing. This is because, as one goes back in time, one reaches a point at which, in Hoyle’s words, the universe was “shrunk down to nothing at all.” [Fred Hoyle, Astronomy and Cosmology (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1975), 658.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist, Oxford University Press 2004, p4.]

- For as Anthony Kenny of Oxford University urges, “A proponent of the big


- Second, even on the traditional, indeterministic interpretation, particles do not

- Philosopher of science Robert Deltete accurately sums up the situation: “There is no basis in ordinary quantum theory for the claim that the universe itself is uncaused, much less for the claim that it sprang into being uncaused from literally nothing.” [Robert Deltete, Critical notice of Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology, by William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, Zygon 30 (1995): 656. (N.B. the review was attributed to J. Leslie due to an editorial mistake at Zygon.)] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p6.]


- For example, some theories, like the Oscillating Universe (which expands and re-contracts forever) or the Chaotic Inflationary Universe (which continually spawns new universes), do have a potentially infinite future, but turn out to have only a finite past. [See I. D. Novikov and Ya. B. Zeldovich, “Physical Processes near Cosmological Singularities,” Annual Review of Astronomy

- Vacuum Fluctuation Universe theories (which postulate an eternal vacuum out of which our universe is born) cannot explain why, if the vacuum was eternal, we do not observe an infinitely old universe. [Christopher Isham, “Creation of the Universe as a Quantum Process,” in Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding, ed. R. J. Russell, W. R. Stoeger, and G. V. Coyne (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1988), 385–387.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist, Oxford University Press 2004, p8.]

- The Quantum Gravity Universe theory propounded by the famous physicist Stephen Hawking, if interpreted realistically, still involves an absolute origin of the universe, even if the universe does not begin in a so-called singularity, as it does in the standard Big Bang theory. [See John D. Barrow, Theories of Everything (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 67–68.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist, Oxford University Press 2004, p8.]


- Some atheists have charged that the argument’s conclusion is incoherent, since a cause must come before its effect, and there is no moment before the Big Bang. This objection, however, is easy to answer. Many causes and effects are simultaneous. Thus, the moment of God’s causing the Big Bang just is the moment of the occurrence of the Big Bang. We can then say that God existing alone without the universe is either (i) before the Big Bang, not in physical time, but in an undifferentiated metaphysical time or else (ii)
strictly timeless, but that He enters into time at the moment of creation. I am not aware of any incoherence in either of these alternatives. [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p8.]

- For example, Stephen Hawking has estimated that if the rate of the universe’s expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have re-collapsed into a hot fireball. [Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 123.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p9.]

- British physicist P. C. W. Davies has calculated that in order to be suitable for later star formation (without which planets could not exist) the relevant initial conditions must be fine-tuned to a precision of one followed by a thousand billion billion zeroes, at least. [P. C. W. Davies, *Other Worlds* (London: Dent, 1980), 160–161, 168–169.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p9.]

- As John Leslie explains, “The claim that blind necessity is involved—that universes whose laws or constants are slightly different aren’t real physical possibilities . . . is eroded by the various physical theories, particularly theories of random symmetry breaking, which show how a varied ensemble of universes might be generated.” [John Leslie, *Universes* (London: Routledge, 1989), 202.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p10.]

- As P. C. W. Davies states: Even if the laws of physics were unique, it doesn’t follow that the physical universe itself is unique. . . . the laws of physics must be augmented by cosmic initial conditions. . . . There is nothing in present ideas about ‘laws of initial conditions’ remotely to suggest that their consistency with the laws of physics would imply uniqueness. Far from it. . . . . . . it seems, then, that the physical universe does not have to be the way it is: it could have been otherwise. [Paul Davies, *The Mind of God* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 169.] [William Lane Craig and Walter


- Bertrand Russell observed: . . . ethics arises from the pressures of the community on the individual. Man . . . does not always instinctively feel the desires which are useful to his herd. The herd, being anxious that the individual should act in its interests, has invented various devices for causing the individual’s interest to be in harmony with that of the herd. One of these . . . is morality. [Bertrand Russell, *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), 124.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p17.]

- Michael Ruse, a philosopher of science at the University of Guelph, agrees. He explains: Morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth. Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when somebody says ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself,’ they think they are referring above and beyond themselves. Nevertheless, such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction . . . and any deeper meaning is illusory. [Michael Ruse, “Evolutionary Theory and Christian Ethics,” in *The Darwinian Paradigm* (London: Routledge, 1989), 262–269.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p17.]

- As John Healey, the Executive Director of Amnesty International, wrote in a fund-raising letter, “I am writing you today because I think you share my profound belief that there are indeed some moral absolutes. When it comes to torture, to government-sanctioned murder, to ‘disappearances’—there are no lesser evils. These are outrages against all of us.” [John Healey, Amnesty

CHAPTER 3 Reason Enough (William Lane Craig)

- The philosopher of science Bernulf Kanitscheider emphasizes with respect to quantum vacuum models of the origin of the universe: The violent microstructure of the vacuum has been used in attempts to explain the origin of the universe as a long-lived vacuum fluctuation. . . . From the philosophical point of view it is essential to note that the foregoing is far from being a spontaneous generation of everything from naught, but the origin of that embryonic bubble is really a causal process leading from a primordial substratum with a rich physical structure to a materialized substratum of the vacuum. Admittedly this process is not deterministic, it includes that weak kind of causal dependence peculiar to every quantum mechanical process. [Bernulf Kanitscheider, “Does Physical Cosmology Transcend the Limits of Naturalistic Reasoning?” in Studies on Mario Bunge’s “Treatise,” ed. P. Weingartner and G. J. W. Dorn (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 346–347.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p57.]

- As Kasner and Newman nicely put it, “the infinite certainly does not exist in the same sense that we say, ‘There are fish in the sea.’ Existence in the mathematical sense is wholly different from the existence of objects in the physical world.” [Edward Kasner and James Newman, Mathematics and the Imagination (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1940), 61. For example, Alexander Abian interprets existence in set theory to mean merely that [8]

- Physicists John Barrow and Frank Tipler emphasize, “At this singularity, space and time came into existence; literally nothing existed before the singularity, so, if the Universe originated at such a singularity, we would truly have a creation ex nihilo.” [John Barrow and Frank Tipler, The Anthropic Cosmological Principle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 442.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p60.]

- Quoting Carr and Rees to the effect that “even if all apparently anthropic coincidences could be explained [in terms of some grand unified theory], it would still be remarkable that the relationships dictated by physical theory happened also to be those propitious for life,” [B. J. Carr and M. J. Rees, “The Anthropic Cosmological Principle and the Structure of the Physical World,” Nature 278 (12 April 1979): 612.] [William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford University Press 2004, p64.]