

**SYNTHESIS OF THE STRONGEST
ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THEISM**
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1. Introduction

For millennia, human beings have sought to find proofs for the existence of God. The field of philosophy has contributed much to this endeavor, but there are so many arguments and so many objections that it can be difficult for a theist to express a unified argument. I argue that a strong and coherent argument for the existence of a moral, intelligent designer (which we call God) can be made by integrating the kalām, fine-tuning, and moral arguments for theism and responding to the objections raised against them.

Several considerations must be brought up prior to the defense of this argument. First, each of the three arguments adds a new dimension to the argument. It is impossible to strongly argue from only one of them that a moral, intelligent designer exists. Second, modern popular sentiment encourages dependence on the empirical sciences as opposed to strictly philosophical arguments. I agree that science has much to offer in this regard, and because science has provided the basis for some of the objections addressed, I will employ certain scientific arguments to adequately defend any necessary claims.

2. The universe was temporally caused by an uncaused first cause.

Popularized by prominent philosopher William Lane Craig, the kalām cosmological argument posits the following: ⁽¹⁾ All things that begin to exist have a first cause of existence. Therefore, ⁽²⁾ since the universe began to exist, ⁽³⁾ it must have had a first cause of existence (Craig). An extension of the argument runs thus: ⁽⁴⁾ The cause of the universe is either a personal, non-temporal, supernatural being *or* impersonal nature, ⁽⁵⁾ but impersonal nature is ruled out because it is part of what came into existence. ⁽⁶⁾ Therefore, a personal, non-temporal, supernatural being formed the universe (Peterson et al. 86).

Craig defends his first premise on the intuitive and experiential knowledge – to which even David Hume, the father of skepticism, readily concurs – that something cannot come from nothing (Greig 187). A common objection to this arises from quantum mechanics: certain virtual particles seem to emerge from an empty vacuum, and atomic nuclei appear to emit alpha (α), beta (β), and gamma (γ) particles in causeless fashion. This objection, however, does not consider that vacuum states are actually arrangements of physical material, and what appears to be creation is merely the rearrangement of matter in vacuums (Albert). Thus, the quantum vacuum cannot be classified as nothingness because it is not devoid of energy; rather, it exists at a very low energy level. According to British quantum cosmologist Christopher Isham, the apparent creation of elementary particles in an accelerator is best defined as the conversion of matter to another type of matter, *not* the creation of new matter or energy (Russell et al. 378). In quantum field theory, particles are always states of the quantum field. While the states of the quantum field may arise spontaneously, the underlying quantum field cannot arise spontaneously.

To defend the second, far more controversial premise, one must prove that the universe began to exist in time. The best way to do this is to consider the opposite: that the universe *did not* begin to exist. If this is so, then the universe constitutes an actual infinite, or a beginningless temporal series of events. But this is counterintuitive and logically absurd. In Hilbert's paradox of the Grand Hotel, a hotel with infinite rooms and guests could claim to be full and simultaneously accommodate an infinite number of additional guests. Another example would be a warehouse with an infinite number of boxes could have an infinite number of green boxes and an infinite number of blue boxes, but the number of green boxes would then equal the total

number of boxes, which makes no sense. Therefore, it is logically unsound to say that the universe is an actual infinite, and this gives credence to the idea of a moment of creation.

Science provides the much-needed *a posteriori* argument. The universe is a closed system, almost like a coffee cup completely sealed off from its outside environment. The second law of thermodynamics says that everything has a tendency move toward equilibrium in a closed system. Thus, the universe will reach a state of equilibrium called “heat death” in which all energy will be depleted. This progression makes it difficult to claim that the universe is eternal, for in such a case the progression toward equilibrium would not be observed.

When Einstein developed the theory of general relativity, he realized that the universe was either contracting or expanding, and this bothered him because he had always assumed a static universe. Thus, he inserted a “cosmological constant” to maintain a static universe, a move he later called the biggest blunder of his life. While it is true that the cosmological constant has since provided an accurate mathematical basis for dark energy, the constant by no means negates the expansion of the universe. In 1929, Edwin Hubble realized that the cosmological redshift observed through astronomy was a direct result of the universe expanding (McDowell and Morrow 73). In 1965, scientists discovered background radiation in space that pointed to an early explosion called the Big Bang (Peterson et al. 88). Today, scientists accept that the universe was created from an instant at which all existing matter and energy was packed into a region of infinite density. Even the initial excited vacuum state from which the universe is said to have arisen required an increase in energy, which still had to be triggered somehow. The concept of a temporal moment of creation certainly aligns with scientific data.

Dawkins and other atheists criticize the kalām argument because they say it merely elevates the question to, “Who created God?” But the kalām argument does not seek to prove that

everything in existence must have a cause. Rather, it seeks to show that everything *with a beginning* has a cause. Because the universe had a beginning (Craig's second premise), it must have a cause. Questioning the cause of each cause leads to infinite regress, which is counterintuitive and in violation of Occam's razor, especially when all other arguments for the existence of God are presented.

The kalām argument presents a powerful case for an immaterial and transcendent force that caused the universe to have a beginning in time. But while Craig insists that the free will of the act of creation points to a *personal creator* (as proposed by medieval Muslim philosopher Al-Ghazali), I believe that this (along with the extended version of Craig's argument) is difficult to defend. The universe may have expanded and contracted in cycles via an impersonal force, or the uncaused cause may have been a mechanical system. Hence, a second line of reasoning must be taken to demonstrate the nature of the first cause.

3. The first cause of the universe was intentional and intelligent.

One of the most powerful teleological arguments for the existence of God is the fine-tuning argument. Perhaps the strongest formulation of the argument has been written by philosopher Robin Collins, who states that the laws of nature, constants of physics, and initial conditions of the universe are finely-tuned to allow life as we know it to exist. This incredible fine-tuning could not have occurred if an intelligent designer had not actively engaged in creating the universe (Collins 66-72).

It has been shown that the four forces of nature – gravity, electromagnetism, the weak force, and the strong force – are needed for the existence of complex life, stars and planets, and atoms of greater atomic number than hydrogen. Removal of any one of the forces would severely alter the balance of life and preclude the existence of much of the universe.

If gravity were increased by one part in ten thousand billion, billion, billion, organisms of human size would be crushed on our Earth, and organisms could not grow larger than insects. Stars with lifetimes of over a billion years (including our Sun) would cease to exist. If Einstein's cosmological constant were increased slightly, stars and galaxies could not form; if it were decreased slightly, the universe would collapse. Likewise, altering the mass of the proton or the neutron would prevent any conceivable form of life from arising in the universe (Manson). Ultimately, the degree of precision that the universe has been fine-tuned to is one part in one hundred million, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion.

The first objection to the fine-tuning argument is that the parameters of the universe's values will eventually be explained by a grand unified theory, and this theory will not need to invoke a designer. But this objection does not consider that the constants of the universe are entailed by the laws of the universe, and the laws themselves had to have been calibrated to allow life to exist in the first place.

The second objection to the fine-tuning argument is that it promotes something that astrophysicist Carl Sagan termed "chauvinism", or the concept that all life resembles life as we know it on Earth (Sagan 46). Contenders say that the fine-tuning argument requires *carbon chauvinism*, or the idea that carbon is required for all forms of life.

What they may not realize is that no other building block exists. Silicon and boron, both thought to be potential carbon substitutes, demonstrate bonding patterns that prevent the formation of complex life. Even when modifying solvents and temperature ranges, there is no substitute for carbon in the formation of life (Millam and Klos). Personally, I argue that the carbon chauvinism objection is irrelevant because fine-tuning is needed for any type of complexity – carbon or otherwise.

Perhaps the most potent objection to fine-tuning argument is the multiverse theory in conjunction with the weak anthropic principle. Multiverse theory suggests that there are multiple universes that share the same basic laws but use different parameters. Assuming infinite (or a vast amount) of these universes, it probabilistically makes sense that at least one of the universes would be fine-tuned for life. The weak anthropic principle then notes that observers could only exist on a universe fine-tuned for life; universes not fine-tuned logically could not have observers (Sober 76-87). Thus, it is fully expected that those who make an argument for fine-tuning live in a fine-tuned universe.

One way to respond to multiverse theory is to state that multiple trials / scenarios do not guarantee an extreme outcome. Having many victims in a firing squad does not increase the probability that one prisoner will be missed by sharpshooters, and a blindfolded prisoner who remarkably survived would not automatically assume that this was due to the presence of many other surrounding prisoners. A skeptic could respond that this argument does not work because the two cases are different: we can observe the full firing squad, but we cannot step out of this universe. In response, I hold that we cannot verify multiverse theory, either, and both single-universe and multiverse require a faith commitment.

The weak anthropic principle may explain why we are able to observe fine-tuning, but it does not explain why this universe in particular was fine-tuned. Applying the principle to the firing squad scenario would be akin to saying, "I should hardly be surprised that I survived because if I hadn't, I would not be contemplating my survival." This fails to realize that it was remarkable in the first place to survive, and we still require an explanation. In the case of the universe, the most reasonable act is to assume that there was an intelligent first cause that intentionally formed the universe and fitted it for life of our kind.

4. The first cause of the universe is linked with a moral order.

The following is a common form of the moral argument (originally proposed by Kant) for the existence of God: ⁽¹⁾ There would be no moral right or wrong if God did not exist. ⁽²⁾ Moral rights and wrongs exist. ⁽³⁾ Therefore, God exists (Peterson et al. 101-104) (Copan).

Robert Adams has presented a reformulated version called divine command theory (Adams). It states that ⁽¹⁾ a theory that holds moral facts as objective is better than one that leaves moral facts dependent on human reasoning. ⁽²⁾ Because a theory that places God as the originator of moral facts fits the objective framework, it is better to hold. ⁽³⁾ But for it to be held, God must exist, and therefore, ⁽⁴⁾ the judgments we make about moral right and wrong demonstrate that God exists. Adams believes divine command theory has an advantage in that it fits our intuition about the nature of morality.

The first objection to this argument is that God is not required for secularists to understand the difference between right and wrong. In response, Adams states that the meaning of right and wrong may not require God, but God's commands provide the moral authority to enforce right and wrong. A second objection mirrors the Euthyphro dilemma by objecting that right and wrong are arbitrary if God chooses a path of cruelty. In this case, we would be prone to misinterpret God's motivations and actions. Adams' rejoinder is that God's commands – of which only obligations stem – are derived from his loving nature. Thus, if we believe that one of God's actions is cruel, we are making an epistemic error.

While these objections wade into complex territory that may offer no resolution, there is an objection that poses a major hurdle, and it asserts that morality evolved over time. First, goal-achieving led to greater levels of satisfaction, so humans continued to seek more virtuous behaviors. Second, morality developed because it promoted the common good and the greatest

chance of survival for a species (even the promotion of altruism was designed to keep species with predator-like tendencies at bay). Third, our ancestors noticed major self-serving benefits to practicing reciprocal altruism and behaving kindly to advance one's status in society.

But this evolutionary explanation only explains why we believe things are right and wrong. It does not explain what is *actually right and wrong* (the normative component). It also does not explain why the way in which we evolved was fine-tuned to match our beliefs with the normative component of morality.

Furthermore, to say that morality is self-serving oversimplifies the issue. Why is self-sacrifice (for those outside of one's immediate family) so greatly admired in culture? It has no evolutionary benefit, nor does it necessarily ensure the survival of anyone other than a single individual. One possibility is establishing a legacy of heroism, but this is a cold and clinical view that does not account for love, a virtue that is universally recognized.

Morality is objective and clearly appeals to a higher moral order. Torture for torture's sake is wrong, as is rape. Anyone who does not recognize this is sociopathic. One might contest that certain cultures justify horrific actions such as genital mutilation, honor killings, and child prostitution. In a small minority of these cases, such actions are wrong but mistakenly done for a greater societal benefit. However, in most of these cases, the actions are known to be wrong and carried out nonetheless. This fact could not be stated without appealing to a higher moral order, and we know that the appeal does not stem from our own sense of self-preservation, since in many cases such actions do not affect us directly.

Moral arguments may not establish the existence of God or a higher being (and here Adams concurs), but they strongly support the idea that the universe has a moral order. Once they are

put side-by-side with the kalām and fine-tuning arguments for theism, the notion emerges of a moral and intelligent designer of the universe.

5. Conclusions and Final Synthesis of the Cumulative Argument

There are a few final considerations. First, there is a synergistic effect when the three strong theistic arguments are integrated; the final argument is far more compelling than each of its components. Second, Craig uses the kalām cosmological argument to argue for the nature of the universe's designer (including the attribute of changelessness), but our cumulative argument will relegate that to another paper and allow the fine-tuning and moral arguments to make statements about the nature of the designer. Third, the question of who designed the designer can lead to infinite regress (as demonstrated above), so we posit that, for this argument only, the most reasonable and elegant solution avoids such a scenario. Nonetheless, it is worth exploring and ought to be addressed as these arguments are continually strengthened. It is at this point that the final argument can be formulated:

⁽¹⁾ If the kalām cosmological argument's premises logically lead to its conclusions and its premises can reasonably withstand objections, then it is reasonable to posit that the universe had a first cause.

⁽²⁾ If the fine-tuning's premises logically lead to its conclusions and its premises can reasonably withstand objections, then it is reasonable to posit that the universe's first cause was intentional and intelligent.

⁽³⁾ If the moral argument's premises logically lead to its conclusions and its premises can reasonably withstand objections, then it is reasonable to posit that the universe is bound by a moral order.

(4) If it is reasonable to assert that morality is objective, then it must be part of the fabric of the universe.

(5) All things that constitute the fabric of the universe must have been made by a first cause of the universe, assuming that the first cause exists.

(6) If a first cause is intentional, intelligent, and able to create the universe, then constituents of the fabric of the universe (as fundamentally and originally created) must align with the nature or will of the first cause.

(7) The kalām, fine-tuning, and moral arguments have been shown to have premises that (A) lead to their conclusions and (B) withstand objections made from the standpoint of philosophical rationale, scientific reasoning, empirical observation, and theoretical logic.

(8) The moral argument's case for objective morality is reasonable and borne out intuitively.

(9) Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that the universe was intentionally caused in time by a moral and intelligent first cause that instituted a framework of morality for the universe.

I believe this first cause to be the God identified in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, and though it will indeed take far more argumentation to link the first cause with this view of God, it is difficult to dispute these initial assertions.

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