



Essential Philosophy with Dr. David Schenk

Lesson 9: Craig's Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God

Outline:

Introduction

- This lecture covers William Lane Craig's Cosmological Argument and 3 of its objections; the next lecture will cover one of the objections—Grünbaum's—in greater depth.
- Dr. Schenk's version of William Lane Craig's argument is a simplified version; the longer version of Craig's argument contains more in-depth math.

William Lane Craig's Cosmological Argument (See Blackboard)

- (1) Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
- (2) The physical universe began to exist ~13.8 billion years ago.
- (3) \therefore , the physical universe has a cause.
- > (4) That cause is God.

- Notes
 - Premise (1) uses *The Principle of Sufficient Reason*, or *The Principle of Causation*, to argue that if something began to exist, then something had to cause it.
 - In Premise (2), Craig uses Big Bang Cosmology (the earth as 13.8 billion years old). Craig grants atheistic physicists and philosophers what they want, while still making an argument that God caused the universe that is 13.8 billion years old.
 - Premise (3) and (4) infer that if the physical universe began 13.8 billion years, then there must be a cause. God is the type of being who fits this cause perfectly!



- Objections to William Lane Craig (8:00)

Objections and Replies to W. L. Craig (see blackboard)

[1] Deny inference to (4). Why couldn't the cause be natural? (10:00)

Reply: Natural laws only apply to natural phenomena. They apply inside a spacetime continuum; they cannot tell you how to get such a continuum from plain nothingness in the first place, though, because nothingness is not a natural, physical thing. So whatever the First Cause is, it must lie outside of nature.

[2] Deny premise (1). Not everything that begins to exist has a cause. (17:00) (Virtual particle experiments)

[3] Deny premise (2). Even granting that the universe is ~ 13.8 billion years old, strictly speaking it did not begin to exist. Therefore, it does not need a cause.

(See Adolf Grünbaum's Argument)

Notes on Objection [1]

- Under Big Bang Cosmology, a Big Bang singularity exists. A Big Bang singularity is a zero dimensional mass point, meaning that the zero dimensional mass point is not extended in space and time—nothing is there.
 - Example: Have you ever heard someone say the Big Bang began when “2 proto- particles collided”? This simply does not fit with Big Bang Cosmology's singularity. Big Bang Cosmology does not tell us how particles collided to form the universe—it tells us how the cosmos emerged from pure nothingness.
- Since Big Bang Cosmology begins with a Big Bang singularity, which means space-time itself emerges from nothingness. Nothingness is not physical, so it is not subject to natural laws. The First Cause, then, is not governed by physical laws and comes from nothingness (God fits this model well).

Notes on Objection [2]

- Quentin Smith, Dr. Schenk's mentor and a friend of Grünbaum, developed this objection in the 1990s following particle experiments conducted by physicists at top-tier universities.
- These particle experiments involved creating a perfect vacuum with the capacity to suck all particles of matter out of a tiny region of space (nearing as



- close to 0 Kelvin as possible). Even a Quantum Vacuum (the most perfect vacuum achieved under any circumstances) still contains quantum fields with statistical fluctuations of energy.
- The physicists found that, in their vacuum of near 0 Kelvin, tiny near-particles kept popping up, only to disappear too quickly to be measured or observed. These were virtual particles, which are not actual particles, popping up in a near-Big Bang singularity of 0 Kelvin.
 - ***For Quentin Smith, this appeared as if, under the right conditions, something like virtual particles might exist out of nothing.***
 - Craig's Response: Virtual particles are not really particles (most physicists agree). They are only strange fluctuations of energy in quantum vacuums. Nothing truly exists that does not begin with a cause.

Note: Dr. Schenk will cover Grünbaum's Objection to W. L. Craig in the next lecture.