

WILLIAM L. CRAIG

CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST

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CRAIG IS A model apologist. He not only writes books containing highly technical arguments to prove that God exists but he has also organised groups whose members are trained to defeat atheists by rational arguments. A Christian, he frequently chastises Christian leaders who say, 'Of course, one cannot prove that God exists, you believe in God by faith', which is exactly what atheists claim, that is, that theism (belief in God) is irrational. Craig is inclined to answer such leaders with, 'I'll give you four proofs for God's existence right now.'

The groups to which I am referring are called Reasonable Faith Chapters. He has established about 80 of these. They study Craig's arguments and learn the art of debating so as to equip themselves to challenge atheists. In addition he encourages philosophy students at his Biola University to take a Ph.D so as to gain lectureships in philosophy departments of universities, which departments are usually hostile to theism. Such graduates already have positions in universities. He runs a website (www.reasonablefaith.com), produces apps, publishes weekly on the internet an answer to a question (often highly technical) from correspondents, and publishes many of his debates and articles for free downloading. Such debates have been held in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne, as well as in Oxford and Cambridge, German and Canadian universities, and, of course, in many American universities and other venues. Further, he has two YouTube channels which show videos of his debates, talks, and interviews which have already attracted 1.4 million inquirers so far in 2015.

Arguments for the Existence of God

1. The Kalam cosmological argument.

Craig wrote his first doctoral dissertation in 1977 at the University of Birmingham on the Kalam cosmological argument. He has defended and expanded that argument in debates and publications ever since. It was formulated by Al-Ghazali, a Persian Muslim scholar about the year 1100. In his book, *On Guard*¹, Craig presents a 'simplified' version of the argument, an argument which is daunting.

The argument goes thus:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause
2. The universe began to exist
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

This is a valid syllogism, so if one accepts that the premises (1 and 2) are true, then one is bound to accept 3 as true. Craig is fond of presenting arguments in the form of a syllogism.

For premise 1 Craig argues:

(A) Something cannot come from nothing;

(B) If something can come into being from nothing, then it becomes inexplicable why just anything and everything does not come into being from nothing;

(C) Common experience and scientific evidence confirm the truth of Premise 1.

For Premise 2 Craig presents two arguments, one philosophical, another scientific.

Philosophical: Answering an objection to Premise 1, namely, that there was no beginning to the universe because the number of states of the universe is infinite which means there is no first one or last one, Craig argues (1) an

actually infinite number of things cannot exist, though it can exist as a mathematical concept (2) nothing can pass through an infinite number of elements at a time and (3) there is a limit to the states of the universe for there is an end to the states by this present moment, by now.

Scientific: (1) the Big Bang—the physical universe began about 16.2 billion years ago and there was no pre-existing space. Craig comments that he has found in his many debates and in talks given to students that nearly everyone believes in the Big Bang, so a theist gains easy acceptance of the premise. The story is different, however, with scientists who argue strongly that the universe is eternal. (2) The thermodynamics of the universe. The second law shows that the universe is running out of energy. Had it been doing so over infinite time it would have run out by now. Yet here we are, so time must be finite and began when the universe began to exist.

As for the objection that the universe brought itself into existence, one espoused by popular atheist Daniel Dennett², Craig says: 'But this is impossible, for in order to create itself, the universe would have to exist already. It would have to exist before it existed. Dennett's view is logically incoherent.'³

So what is this cause of the universe? Craig shows by conceptual analysis that it is a being which is timeless, immaterial, and unimaginably powerful.

He holds that his argument is strengthened by that of German philosopher, G. W.F. Leibniz (1646-1716) who argues that there must be an explanation for the existence of the universe. He asks, 'Why does something exist rather than nothing?' His answer is the Principle of Sufficient Reason: there must be an explanation for the existence of one state of affairs rather than another.⁴

The answer cannot be any contingent thing, where 'contingent' means 'something that might or might not exist.' Nor can it be the aggregate of contingent beings, for the



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universe is the aggregate of contingent beings, so is itself contingent. Whether the universe is infinite and eternal makes no difference, for it still demands explanation. The reason, therefore for the existence of the universe must be outside it 'in a being whose existence is self-contained: it is its own sufficient reason for existing and is the reason for the universe's existing as well. God is a metaphysically necessary being.'

Note that Leibniz is seeking for an explanation of the universe which he finds in a cause.

By this time you will be asking: 'Is this the standard of argument that Craig demands of his Defenders, the neophytes who are preparing to debate with atheists?' It is. He is training warriors.

The Fine-Tuning Argument (Goldilocks Factor)

Anyone who reflects on the fact that planet Earth is hospitable to humans cannot fail to be amazed, given that every part of the universe of which we have knowledge is extremely hostile to life of any kind, even the life of a hardy microbe. The fact calls insistently for an explanation. Of course, there may be no explanation but, like scientists, we do our best to find one.

Cosmologists have long noted how specific the conditions for life have to be. Some simple examples are: we have to be a certain distance from the sun—there is an unimaginable range of temperatures in the

no one thinks, whereas 'I believe $2+2=4$ ' is true only if I have the state of mind called 'believing'. He argues that it is wrong to massacre Jews as happened during the Holocaust no matter what anyone thinks—that it is an objective moral value.

But why believe there are objective moral values? In answer he examines various moral theories to show none of them provides

justification in the form of a foundation. The only plausible foundation is the nature of God.

Note that Craig presents a cumulative case for God's existence, as does Richard Swinburne, so that whilst one argument may have limited cogency, a cumulative argument makes it rational to believe in God.

I recommend Craig to the apologist.

ENDNOTES

1. William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending your Faith with Reason and Precision* (David Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2010)
2. Daniel C Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (NY: Viking, 2006), 244.
3. Craig, *On Guard*, 99. Cf. Lawrence M. Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing: Why there is Something Rather than Nothing* (NY: Atria paperback, 2012),

183: 'We have discovered that all signs suggest a universe that could and plausibly did arise from a deeper nothing ... '

4. William Lane Craig: *Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd edn (Crossword Books, 2008), 99.
4. Paul Davies, *The Goldilocks Enigma: Why is the Universe just Right for life?* (London, Penguin, 2006), 2-3.

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves. (cf. Ex 33:18; Ps 27:8-9; 63:2-3; Jn 14:8; 1 Jn 3:2)

—John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, opening statement.