An Argument for the Existence of a Personal First Cause in a Beginningless Universe

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Abstract I argue in this paper that if the universe does not have a beginning, then it has a first event and this event was brought about by an uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical mind.

Keywords Cosmological argument; First cause; Libertarianism

In this paper, I assume that the universe does not have a beginning and I examine the logical implications of that assumption. I argue that there is a ‘first event’ in the universe and that this event was brought about by an uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical mind.

(1) If the universe did not begin to exist, then (i) the A-theory of time is incorrect, (ii) the temporal series of past events in the universe is non-finite, (iii) the temporal series of past events in the universe is finite, and the first event in this temporal series terminates an infinite chain of simultaneous events that are causally connected to each other and occur entirely within the universe, or

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1 For the purposes of this argument, I define the word “universe” as an arbitrary, complete chain of necessary physical causes – including all physical objects and all physical events that are causally involved in this causal chain – which stands in a causal relation to a human observer. (The term “physical object” is broadly construed as anything that can possibly serve as a “material cause” – as opposed to an “efficient cause”.) As such, the universe, in the narrow sense of a space-time bubble or in the wider sense of the totality of physical reality (or anywhere in between), comprises an uncountable number of “universes” as I define them. So long as one grants that, in our space-time bubble or in the totality of physical reality (or in…), “every event that can broadly logically have a cause does have a cause” (Moreland 1997, p. 549), the conclusion of the argument which I present in this paper will be applicable to any typical construal of the word “universe”.

2 When referring to the universe, I use the phrases “has a beginning” and “begins to exist” in the following way: the universe has a beginning or begins to exist if and only if the A-theory of time is correct, the temporal series of past events in the universe is finite, there is a ‘first event’ in the universe (see footnote 3) and the universe is not causally prior to that event.

3 the first event in the series of events that comprises (a) the temporal chain of past events in the universe and (b) the causal chain of simultaneous events, if any, that occur within the universe causally prior to and simultaneously with the first event in (a).

4 An agent that is capable of exercising its volition without any antecedent determining conditions.

5 This was discussed in the April 2003 debate between William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith (http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-the-craig-smith-debate-2003).
(iv) the temporal series of past events in the universe is finite, there exists a ‘first event’ in the universe and the universe is causally prior to this event (Craig 1991; Morriston 2002).

(2) The universe did not begin to exist. \((\text{Assumption})^{6}\)

(3) \((1)(i)\) is false (Craig 2000a; Craig 2000b).

(4) \((1)(ii)\) is false.

\(\text{(4.1a)}\) An actually infinite number of things cannot exist (Craig & Sinclair 2009, pp. 106-115).

\(\text{(4.2a)}\) A non-finite temporal series of past events consists of an actually infinite number of things (Craig & Sinclair 2009, pp. 115-116).

\text{From (4.1a) and (4.2a):}

\(\text{(4.3a)}\) A non-finite temporal series of past events cannot exist.

\(\text{(4.1b)}\) An actually infinite collection of things cannot be formed by successive addition (Craig & Sinclair 2009, pp. 117-124).

\(\text{(4.2b)}\) A temporal series of past events is a collection of things formed by successive addition (Craig & Sinclair 2009, p. 124).

\text{From (4.1b) and (4.2b):}

\(\text{(4.3b)}\) A temporal series of past events cannot be actually infinite.

\(\text{(4.4b)}\) A non-finite temporal series of past events consists of an actually infinite number of things.

\text{From (4.3b) and (4.4b):}

\(\text{(4.5b)}\) A temporal series of past events cannot be non-finite.\(^7\)

(5) \((1)(iii)\) is false.

\(\text{(5.1)}\) A causal chain of simultaneous events must have a beginning. \((\text{From 4.1a})^{8}\)

\text{From (1) to (5):}

(6) The temporal series of past events in the universe is finite, there exists a ‘first event’ in the universe and the universe is causally prior to this event.

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\(^6\) The universe cannot have a beginning for example if (i) the creation of the universe is an event that can broadly logically have a cause and (ii) every event that can broadly logically have a cause has at least one material cause or at least one efficient cause and one material cause (see footnote 10).

\(^7\) See also Luna, 2010.

\(^8\) Idem.
(7) The universe is an arbitrary, complete chain of necessary physical causes – including all physical objects and all physical events that are causally involved in this causal chain – which stands in a causal relation to a human observer.

(8) If (6) and (7) are true,

then some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary\} to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe consist in the existence of one or more beginningless things within the universe.

*From (6), (7) and (8):*

(9) Some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in the existence of one or more beginningless things within the universe.

(10) If (9) is true,

then some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning.

*From (9) and (10):*

(11) Some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning.

(12) If all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning,

then the ‘first event’ in the universe occurred an infinitely long time ago.

(13) It is impossible for the ‘first event’ in the universe to have occurred an infinitely long time ago.

(13.1) Where \(A\) is any event that is preceded by an infinite temporal series of events and \(B\) is any event which is comprised within that infinite temporal series, there is a finite interval of time between \(A\) and \(B\) (Whitrow 1980).

(13.2) If an event has occurred an ‘infinitely long time ago’,

then there is an infinite interval of time between \(A\) and \(B\).

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9 By “causal conditions which are jointly necessary to…” I mean: “causal conditions which are jointly necessary, but not sufficient, or jointly necessary and sufficient to…”
From (13.1) and (13.2):

(13.3) It is impossible for any event to have occurred an infinitely long time ago.

From (12) and (13):

(14) It is not the case that all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning.

From (11) and (14):

(15) Some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} have a beginning.

(16) If (i) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} have a beginning, (ii) a non-finite temporal series of past events cannot exist, and (iii) a causal chain of simultaneous events must have a beginning, then some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} came into existence a finite time ago, outside of the universe, in an uncaused event, in a finite number of simultaneous events*, in a finite number of temporally ordered events*, or in a finite number of temporally ordered events* and a finite number of simultaneous events*. [*some or all of which are uncaused or form a finite causal chain]

From (4.3a/4.5b), (5.1), (15) and (16):

(17) Some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} came into existence a finite time ago, outside of the universe, in an uncaused event, in a finite number of simultaneous events*, in a finite number of temporally ordered events*, or in a finite number of temporally ordered events* and a finite number of simultaneous events*. [*some or all of which are uncaused or form a finite causal chain]

(18) If (17) is true, then some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more non-physical entities, or an event [resulting from a finite causal chain of events] which was brought about by an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more non-physical entities.
From (17) and (18):

(19) Some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more non-physical entities, or an event [resulting from a finite causal chain of events] which was brought about by an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more non-physical entities.

Reformulated in accordance with Occam’s razor:
Some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more non-physical entities.

(20) If (19) is true, then some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more abstract objects or non-physical minds.

From (19) and (20):

(21) Some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more abstract objects or non-physical minds.

(22) Abstract objects cannot stand in causal relations.

(23) If (21) and (22) are true, then some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more non-physical minds.

From (21), (22) and (23):

(24) Some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of one or more non-physical minds.

Reformulated in accordance with Occam’s razor:
Some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind.
If (i) some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, (ii) a non-finite temporal series of past events cannot exist, (iii) a causal chain of simultaneous events must have a beginning, (iv) every event that can broadly logically have a cause does have a cause, and (v) a non-physical mind coming into being is an event that can broadly logically have a cause, then some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which either did not come into being (i.e. is beginningless), or came into being in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events – involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both – of which the first event(s) have a cause, unless they cannot broadly logically have a cause.

Every event that can broadly logically have a cause does have a cause.\(^{10}\)

A non-physical mind coming into being is an event that can broadly logically have a cause.

From (4.3a/4.5b), (5.1), (24), (25), (26) and (27):

Some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which either did not come into being (i.e. is beginningless), or came into being in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events – involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both – of which the first event(s) have a cause, unless they cannot broadly logically have a cause.

Reformulated in accordance with Occam’s razor:

\(^{10}\) The original premise, as stated by William Lane Craig, is “Everything that begins to exist has a cause.” For a presentation of Craig’s arguments in support of this premise, see pp. 182-190 in Craig & Sinclair, 2009. In Moreland, 1997, p. 549, J. P. Moreland gives the following possible description of the causal principle: “every event that can broadly logically have a cause does have a cause.” He explains: “As we saw earlier, it is broadly logically impossible for someone to be caused to agent-cause something else, a volition, for example. So if we grant that an exercise of power is an event (that is, a change within the agent), when we recognize that such an exercise just is the event of an agent directly agent-causing his volition (the exercise of power isn’t an event caused by the agent which, in turn, event causes the volition), it becomes clear that it does not have an efficient cause because it cannot (though it may have a reason which serves as the final cause of the exercise of power).”
Some of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which did not come into being (i.e. is beginningless), and none of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an uncaused event or in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events, involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both.\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) None of the {causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an uncaused event or in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events, involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both:

(1) \textit{If all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s) in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe}\}\} exist without beginning,}

\textit{then the first event(s) in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe}\} occurred an infinitely long time ago.}

(2) \textit{It is impossible for the first event(s) in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe}\} to have occurred an infinitely long time ago. [see premise 17 in argument]}

\textit{From (1) and (2):}

(3) \textit{It is not the case that all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s) in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe}\}\} exist without beginning.}

(4) \textit{If (i) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events – involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both – of which the first event(s) have a cause, unless they cannot broadly logically have a cause, and (ii) all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s)* in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}\} consist in (a) the existence of one or more uncaused physical objects, (b) the existence of one or more uncaused abstract objects, (c) one or more uncaused non-libertarian non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the first event(s)*, or (d) a combination of (a), (b) and (c),}

\textit{then all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s) in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}\}}
the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning.

From (3) and (4):

(5) If some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events – involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both – of which the first event(s) have a cause, unless they cannot broadly logically have a cause,

then it is not the case that all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s)* in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}\} consist in (a) the existence of one or more uncaused physical objects, (b) the existence of one or more uncaused abstract objects, (c) one or more uncaused non-libertarian non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the first event(s)*, or (d) a combination of \((a), (b)\) and \((c)\).

(6) If \((i)\) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events – involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both – of which the first event(s) have a cause, unless they cannot broadly logically have a cause, and

(ii) it is not the case that all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s)* in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}\} consist in (a) the existence of one or more uncaused physical objects, (b) the existence of one or more uncaused abstract objects, (c) one or more uncaused non-libertarian non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the first event(s)*, or (d) a combination of \((a), (b)\) and \((c)\),

then some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s)* (which are causally posterior to those causal conditions) in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}\} consist in one or more uncaused libertarian non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the first event(s)*.

From (5) and (6):

(7) If some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events – involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both – of which the first event(s) have a cause, unless they cannot broadly logically have a cause,

then some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the first event(s)* (which are causally posterior to those causal conditions) in the \{finite causal chain(s) of events that brought into being the non-physical mind that created some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}\} consist in one or more uncaused libertarian non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the first event(s)*.
(29) \textit{If} (i) some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in the existence of one or more beginningless things within the universe, 
(ii) abstract objects cannot stand in causal relations, 
(iii) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which did not come into being (i.e. is beginningless), and none of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an uncaused event or in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events, involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both, 
(iv) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless non-libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and 
(v) it is not the case that some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, \textit{then} \textbf{all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning.}

\textit{From (9), (22), (28) and (29):}

(30) \textit{If} (i) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless non-libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and 
(ii) it is not the case that some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, \textit{then} \textbf{all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning.}

(31) \textit{If} all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning, \textit{then} the ‘first event’ in the universe occurred an infinitely long time ago.
From (13) and (31):

(32) It is not the case that all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} exist without beginning.

From (30) and (32):

(33) It is not the case that \{(i) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless non-libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and (ii) it is not the case that some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}.

(34) If

(i) some or all of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in the existence of one or more beginningless things within the universe,

(ii) abstract objects cannot stand in causal relations,

(iii) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which did not come into being (i.e. is beginningless), and none of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in an exercise of causal power on the part of a non-physical mind, which came into being in an uncaused event or in an event which terminates one or multiple finite causal chain(s) of events, involving simultaneous causation, temporal causation or both,

(iv) it is not the case that \{(i) some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless non-libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and (ii) it is not the case that some of the \{causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\} consist in one or more uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe\}.

then

the causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe consist in (i) one or more uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and possibly, one or more uncaused and beginningless non-libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe.
universe, and (ii) the existence of one or more beginningless things within the universe.

From (9), (22), (28), (33) and (34):

(35) The causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe consist in (i) one or more uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and possibly, one or more uncaused and beginningless non-libertarian, non-physical minds exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and (ii) the existence of one or more beginningless things within the universe.

Reformulated in accordance with Occam’s razor:
The causal conditions which are jointly necessary to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe consist in (i) an uncaused and beginningless libertarian, non-physical mind exercising the volition to bring about the ‘first event’ in the universe, and (ii) the existence of one or more beginningless things within the universe.

References