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## Why Say the Beginning of the Universe Points to God?

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**#STRask** - Stand to Reason

Questions about why one should conclude the beginning of the universe points to God rather than another explanation and whether logic is created or an aspect of God's character.

### Transcript

#STRask Why Say the Beginning of the Universe Points to God? #STRask Why Say the Beginning of the Universe Points to God? This is the #STRask podcast. I'm Amy Hall and Greg Koukl's here with me and we are here to answer the questions you send us on Twitter with the hashtag #STRask. And we are going to start today, Greg, with a question from Firesheba.

Many people believe the universe didn't come from nothing but an unknown theoretical, naturalistic, or mythical cause. Why is the Christian God logically necessary in light of endless other explanations that try to fill the same blink? Okay, I'm glad for this question because it I think betrays a misunderstanding of the argument that I offer. Right? Given, and this is an important given, the origin of the universe, given that there was when there was no universe and then there was a universe.

Okay, we're talking about standard big bang cosmology. And there is a tremendous amount of observational astronomical evidence for that and evidence in general relativity and in special relativity. So this is theoretical physics and in philosophy.

So there's a range of arguments in favor of the universe coming into existence. And I mean the whole shebang, the whole physical kind of thing. There's been attempts to find, to exploit what Stephen Meyer is called a quantum loophole, where you make a jump to quantum physics.

I think Krauss does this in his book, A Universe from Nothing, and argues that certain mathematical things need to be in play can be in place that then have an effect of causing the university. The problem is with this is mathematics are abstract and abstract

entities have no causal power and also abstract entities arguably exist in a mind. So even if you are arguing in that way from math, you still have no material world, you have math as abstract entities that are not active, but rather inert, and you have a mind that holds the abstract entity.

So a non physical mind, and that's precisely what they're trying to avoid. So I don't think that solves any problems. The evidence we have now, and I'm not talking about the theoretical models, there are all kinds of models that are being offered as a ways of explaining the universe without resorting to a divine mind as the responsible cause.

Okay, here is the way my argument works. Given the beginning of the universe, and by the way, there's some other important work by Borde, Guth, and Vilenkin, it's called the BGV theorem that says any universe that is expanding, no matter how you conceptualize it, had to have an absolute beginning. So the actual evidence for an actual beginning, an absolute beginning of our universe is very, very strong.

Even though there are many cosmologists who don't yet want to acknowledge it, and I think Alan Guth thinks we have any eternal universe. I don't know how he solves the problem of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which is really a significant issue. But nevertheless, most of them say we don't know.

But the evidence that we have right now from those three areas, astronomical, theoretical physics, and third category, I just mentioned it. Philosophical? Philosophical, yeah. Points to an absolute beginning.

Now, with an absolute beginning in place, now you ask the question, what is the cause of the absolute beginning? And you have one of two options, generally speaking. So now I'm working in a metaphysical categories. The first one that I'm using is the metaphysical category of cause and effect.

Cause and effect is not a scientific category because cause and effect cannot be empirically determined or seen as it were. And David Hume made a huge deal about this. You know, he was a radical empiricist.

You can't see cause and effect. You can just see things happening. And therefore, you know, he questioned the legitimacy of cause and effect.

So it's not something physical. That effects need causes adequate to the effect is a metaphysical principle that all of science depends on. Why did this effect take place? What is the cause that's adequate to it? So I'm drawing from that and I'm also drawing from the law of non-contradiction, which I'm sorry, the law of excluded middle, either a or non a either caused or not caused.

That's your only options. All right. Now, if you want to say the universe came into existence with no cause, then that's an option.

To me, it's not the, it's not the intuitive option. It's not the obvious option. It's not where the smart money is because we have a principle of causality that is very well established and science depends upon it.

Now, if you want to go and say, well, we know that in the physical world, but we don't know that in a non physical world and that's treating causality as a physical, scientific empirical principle. It is not, as David Hume has pointed out, it is a metaphysical principle. All right.

And so it would imply in either case. So then I just simply ask the question, if it's caused and that makes the most sense, what is the, what kind of cause would be adequate to the effect? And this is also a metaphysical principle that is employed by science all the time. I give an illustration sometimes when I was, when I talk about this about preparing this particular talk at this point on some notes while I was in, in a, in a hotel in, in Poland, and there was a big bang in the room.

There was an explosion. It was actually a tire that exploded. Somebody had been pumping up, but it was, I mean, it was like every shocked everybody.

And everybody's thinking, what caused that? You know, what was that? What caused it? Now, if I said, well, a paint, a pen dropped on the carpet, no one would accept it because that is not an adequate cause for the effect. So then we ask ourselves the question, what kind of cause is adequate to create the material universe as we know that runs according to a certain set of uniform principles, natural laws? Well, it's going to have to be an agent because only an agent can initiate the cause. It can't be physical or material in any sense because the material universe is the effect.

Okay. And when you start asking these questions, it's happening pretty powerful, pretty smart, et cetera, et cetera. That seems obvious.

These are the kinds of characteristics that describe the God that Christians defend in classical theism. Now, if that's not the answer, then, and, and something causes it, you're going to have to come up. Someone's going to have to come up with a different cause that is adequate to the effect.

Okay. That's all. I don't, those are the logical categories that people are stuck with.

And so I'm not saying God had to cause it. What I'm saying is he is the most likely candidate. That's where the smart money is.

Someone like God. Okay. And, and that's, that's the, that's the cosmological argument, actually the form of the cosmological argument called the column, cosmological argument.

It's, it's, it's not, it's, some people don't think it goes through, but then you ask them,

why doesn't it go through? Well, we're working on models to show. Well, you can work on models all day long. All models are conjectures.

And the problem with a lot of these models, and I was talking to Stephen Meyer about this just the other night on the phone, the problem with a lot of these models is they don't work. And the contemporaries of those who are making the models are pointing out this isn't going to work. Let's try something else.

Okay. So as long as they're working with models, models aren't evidence models are conjectures. All right.

Here's what we know. We have good reason to believe there was a absolute beginning to the universe because of logical categories. Either the universe was caused or uncaused.

Caused seems to be the most sensible option. Then we have to ask ourselves, what are the kind, what kind of cause would be adequate to the effect? And we have one. We can reason to that cause, and then lo and behold, that cause fits the profile of the God of classical theism.

So there's nothing amiss here withdrawing the conclusion that the God of classical theism is the cause of the universe. All the pieces fit together, even though it's not an, I'm not claiming it's an absolute proof. I'm just saying the smart money is on this option.

So I've been jotting down the things that you mentioned here, Greg, you said an agent, immaterial, powerful, smart. And I would also add to that moral because we also see just by looking around the existence of an objective morality. Right.

And there are probably other things too. I think if we thought about it, we might be able to bring into this. The reason, if I could just jump in here, Amy, I didn't put that on the list because that is a point of contention with atheists.

All right. Especially one I've just recently encountered who just simply denies objective morality and goes to some naturalistic explanation of moral feelings, which is Darwinism. Right.

And it's also not something that comes directly from the idea of the beginning of the universe. You have to add another argument in for that. My point is just that there are other aspects of reality that can come into play here, besides just that one thing about the beginning of the universe.

Yeah. The God we're talking about has additional explanatory power, or I should say provides additional explanatory power for other features of the universe, like the order of the universe. That's teleology, like the morality of the universe, if a person is going to acknowledge objective morality, which in my view is absolutely secured by the problem of evil.

If there is a problem of evil, they can only be so if there's objective morality. Relativism cannot produce a genuine problem of evil. Anyway, so those are other things that get explained with this explanation of the origin of the universe, the cosmological question.

And then I wanted to specifically note what your list here, the immaterial powerful smart agent, this rules out the idea of a force, like a natural law of some kind, or even a supernatural force that's not personal agent that doesn't cause things. It rules out a natural cause, and it rules out no cause. So there are a lot of things that people propose as an answer to the beginning of the universe that are ruled out by these other conclusions we come from the argument.

And what I want people to see here too is I'm not, this is not God of the gaps. I'm not just making these things up. This is a very careful process of reasoning that apart from the empiricism of the scientific method is very consistent with the kind of thing the scientific method, enterprise, I should say probably, produces.

It looks at an effect and asks the question what caused that? It presumes causality. And part of the question has to do with the adequacy of the cause suggested to create the effect in question. That's it.

There's nothing tricky about this. And then the final thing I want to note because Firesheba asked, why is the Christian God logically necessary? I will also say, I don't think we can narrow down as far as the specifically Christian God necessarily. I think, I mean, I think there are other arguments that can do that, obviously, but if you're just looking at the origin of the universe, there are other monotheistic options out there.

So I don't, I don't, and I don't think you were saying this either, Greg, that this argument narrows down to the Christian God. It just rules out a lot of options that are unlike God. Right.

That's right. And there are going to be some people that argue for the logical necessity of God. Okay.

I don't know if Bill Craig does that. I can't recall. But that's not the case we're making.

What we're, what we're trying to do is it's an abductive reasoning. Okay. It is, it is an inference to the best explanation.

Okay. And that's all we're doing. And this is a completely legitimate way of knowing.

Is it empirical? No. Because you can't, this question can't be answered empirically. All right.

We are outside of empiricism, but why is that a liability? There are all kinds of questions we can't answer empirically. All right, because it's, I, I can't, I can't know what I had for

dinner three nights ago by the empirical method. All right.

I know it through a different method, my direct awareness of what I ate and my memory of such. All right. That's how I know that.

And in fact, most, we can know things by authority. That's another means that we, that we individually know things. And I'm not talking about the Bible.

Every time we cite scientists, we're citing an authority we think is credible. So there are lots of ways of knowing things than just empiricism. And empiricism itself well has real liabilities because if you say empiricism is the only way to know something for sure, like science, that statement itself cannot be proven as knowledge or demonstrated to be knowledge according to empirical methods itself refuting along with scientism and verificationism, which are other concepts that are related to this problem.

Let's go on to a question from Thomas. Here's what, here's his question. Is logic an aspect of God's character like love or justice? Or is it a created dimension that he is not bound by like space or time? Well, in a way, it's a trick question.

The either or here, is it create, is it something created that he has not bound by? Okay. Well, I'm not going to pursue that because it's too vague right now or the question. Let me just say this.

The laws of logic are necessary, all right? Either a or non a or that's the law of excluded middle or a equals a that's the law of identity or a cannot be non a at the same time and in the same way. Now there's as long as the word a is represents the same thing on either side of that equal mark. That's the law of non contradiction.

Now we employ these things all the time and we are not employing them as conventions. We just made that up and we can make up something different. We can't.

These are necessary features of reality. There is in my sense, God is not going to be able to create a world in which those necessary principles don't exist. That's what it means for them to be necessary.

No possible world in which they don't exist. And the best way, I think, to ground that is in the nature of God himself. Okay.

So I would say they are not arbitrary. They are not created. And how do I know they're not created? And just and this is where you're not going to find some empirical method to assess this.

It's it's outside of empiricism. That's a category error. Where's your empirical proof? You know, where's my empirical proof that two plus two equal four? You know, I mean, it's like anyway, the point I'm making is this is just a matter of reflection.

And we have reliable intuitions that inform us about these things. The laws of logic are necessary. If  $a = b$  and  $b = c$ , then  $a = c$ . That's a transitive property or something like that.

So there are a whole bunch of these things. By the way, this is why I can use letters to describe it. I don't have to use physical things to describe it because you can conceptualize the nature of the rational relationship without having any physical thing.

And philosophers do this all the time with all the letters, because they're trading in abstract, rational categories that are clear to someone who has the rational faculties intact. And I don't know that I would call it an aspect of his character as much as a description of his being as a rational ordered mind. It's it's a reflection of his mind as a rational mind.

So it's not something outside of God that he's conforming to. It's it's his rational nature. And when we put it into words, we're describing what it means to be rational, what it means to have order in the universe, because that's who God is.

So hopefully that will help you out there, Thomas. And we make a point. Yeah, and that is, right now, I'm especially sensitive to atheists listening who might say, Hey, wait, not so fast.

I remember the question has to do with the necessity or non necessity of rational categories. We're claiming they're necessary. Okay, then the Christian asks from a Christian perspective, are these things then in the mind of God, or are they something he creates? And I'm answering from the Christian perspective, they would have to be in the mind of God.

I'm not presuming Christianity across the board. What I am asserting, common sensically, is that rational categories are necessary. Then the question is, if you're a Christian, where would those be kind of located or how does that fit in with with God? And I think just to finish up his question, he asked, is it created? And it's not something he creates.

Correct. It's who he is. Yeah.

All right. Thank you, Thomas. And thank you, Firesheba.

We really appreciate hearing from you. If you have a question, send it on Twitter with the hashtag #STRask. This is Amy Hall and Greg Kogel for Stand to Reason.

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(upbeat music)