

Preface

Issues concerning the ultimate origins of the Universe and God have generated huge public interest recently with the publication of books promoting and responding to the so-called New Atheism. There has also been a resurgence of interest in theistic arguments in academia in recent decades, one of the most discussed being the Kalam Cosmological Argument (KCA) (Copan and Craig 2017). The KCA, as formulated by its noteworthy recent proponent, William Lane Craig (Craig and Sinclair 2009), is as follows:

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
2. The Universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the Universe has a cause.

Craig argues that further analyses of the Cause of the Universe show that this Cause possesses various theistic properties, such as being uncaused, beginningless, timeless, enormously powerful and possessing free will. Critics have raised various objections, such as arguing that Craig has not shown that everything that begins to exist has a cause, and that Craig's defence of the argument for a beginning of the Universe

based on the impossibility of concrete actual infinities begs the question against the existence of an actual infinite.

This book develops a novel argument which combines the Kalam with the Thomistic Cosmological Argument. It approaches an ongoing dispute concerning whether there is a First Cause of time from a radically new point of view, namely by demonstrating that there is such a First Cause without requiring the controversial arguments against concrete infinities and against traversing an actual infinite (although these arguments remain defensible, see Chap. 2). Readers would discover the synthesis of a familiar Thomist story about infinite sequences of train cars with the KCA; this synthesis constitutes one of the novel features of this book. This point of originality is combined with other novelties, such as a new ‘infinite additions of zero’ argument and the replacement of the traditional Leibnizian/Thomistic focus on the necessity/pure actuality of the First Cause with a focus on the beginninglessness of the First Cause. This book also offers a robust defence of the traditional form of Kalam by presenting original arguments in response to various objections to the Kalam. These include new defences for the argument for the impossibility of traversing an actual infinite, and a reply to Puryear’s latest responses to myself and Dumsday in Puryear (2016). I defend the coherence of the view that time might be continuous yet naturally divide into smallest parts of finite durations, and show that Puryear’s conceptualist view of time is implausible and that it does not block the finitist’s argument in any case.

A key premise of both arguments is the Causal Principle: ‘everything that begins to exist has a cause’. This book develops a novel philosophical argument for the principle which is stronger and more rigorous than other arguments which have been proposed thus far, and which comprehensively addresses objections based on metaphysical theorising by naturalists such as Oppy (2010, 2015). I also demonstrate that, contrary to Craig and Sinclair (2009, 183–184), the Causal Principle can be shown to be true without presupposing the dynamic theory of time. Very roughly, the argument shows that if something (e.g., the Universe) begins to exist uncaused, then many other kinds of things/events which can begin to exist would also begin to exist uncaused, because: (i) there would not be any causally antecedent condition which would make it

the case that only universes (rather than other kinds of things) begin to exist; and (ii) the properties of universes and of other kinds of things/ events which differentiate between them would be had by them only when they had already begun to exist.

In addition, this book offers a more detailed discussion on whether a First Cause of time can be avoided by a causal loop than other publications on the KCA. It makes original contributions to the debate by engaging with recent work on casual loops by Meyer (2012) and Romero and Pérez (2012), and show that, contrary to these authors, the required causal loop is viciously circular and metaphysically impossible. This book also draws certain parallels between the conclusions of my novel argument with the Hartle–Hawking (1983) model, shows that the deeper conceptual problem with the Hartle–Hawking model is that it cannot satisfactorily address issues concerning the origination of change, and demonstrates that the required property is characteristic of libertarian agency rather than quantum system.

Finally, this book addresses epistemological issues related to the KCA which have been relatively neglected by recent publications on the KCA, and demonstrates (contra Hawking et al.) the continual relevance and significance of philosophy for answering ultimate questions. In particular, I present various arguments against scientistic and radical post-modernist views relevant to the Cosmological Argument, demonstrate that philosophical arguments are capable of yielding knowledge about reality that are more epistemically certain than scientific discoveries, develop such a philosophical argument for a personal First Cause, and explain why the progress of science would never replace the need for such a First Cause.

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Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Andrew Ter Ern Loke

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