

## Article

# What Caused the First Cause?

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## Abstract

As 17<sup>th</sup> philosopher Baruch Spinoza has reasoned, the first cause must have caused itself. How is that possible? It could happen through an act of self-awareness - through the concept "I AM." Reaching that conclusion involves several premises. These include: the validity of the Big Bang; the absence of time and space before the Big Bang; the certainty of the future; and the claim the Universe is God - that latter claim being the most doubtful. All these claims, however, are backed by logic and/or solid scientific proof.

**Keywords:** First cause, God, self-awareness, space, time, Big Bang, Universe, Spinoza, scientific proof.

## 1. Introduction

In 1929 Edwin Hubble, peering through the telescope at the Mount Wilson Observatory, discovered distant galaxies travelling away from us and from each other in every direction. This lent confirmation to George Lemaitre's 1927 theory in which he proposed the Universe began from an "atom" which burst forth all the matter and energy we see today. Fred Hoyle later appended the derisive term "Big Bang" to the Hubble-Lemaitre concept (1949). However, a final confirmation of the theory came in 1964 when Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB). Penzias and Wilson measured CMB radiation, which pervades the entire Universe, at 3.5 degrees Kelvin - almost exactly what it should have been had there occurred a Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago. For this finding, the two astrophysicists won the Nobel Prize.

If the Universe began with the Big Bang, then so did time and space (ASA et al, 2015; Temmer, 2014). Before then there was no "before." And if there was no before, then there was no prior cause. There was no Creator, no multiverse, no quantum fluctuation. No "before" literally means *no before*. On the other hand, for those who believe the Big Bang was not the first cause, the conundrum remains: whatever they think the first cause really was, what caused that?

Some investigators propose the Universe never had a beginning because it is eternal. So, no need to explain the first cause. For example, in the Big Bounce theory (Davis, 2019) the Universe is described as eternally expanding, then contracting, then expanding again. But the problem here is even this cycle had to begin sometime. Alternatively, In 1915 Einstein proposed a "steady state" Universe (Aczel, 2014). In his concept of a "universal constant," the Cosmos neither expands nor contracts but just stays the same. Einstein had to retract that theory, however, after Hubble announced his findings. William Lane Craig (2014) further casts doubt on any

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eternal notion of the Cosmos, because entropy - the theory that over time, everything becomes disorganized - would long since have caused the Universe to break down and disperse.

Outside of science, the most popular genesis theory is: God did it. In that case, the Big Bang would not have been the first cause, and the actual first cause would be an eternal Being. But all that would have to be taken on faith, because there is no way it could be proven.

Aside from theology, however, the 17th Century philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1677) observes every cause is produced by a prior cause. And this is true for everything but the first cause. The first cause, Spinoza concluded, must have caused itself.

Taking Spinoza at his word, the Universe must have caused itself. But how is that possible?

## 2. The Universe is God

If the Big Bang were the first cause, and if the first cause caused itself, then the Universe itself may be God.

Compare the prevailing notion of God to the Universe-as-God. On the one hand we have an invisible, undetectable, inaccessible, transcendent spirit. We have what major western religions call "The Ultimate Mystery" (Keating, 2024). On the other hand we have the very real, very observable, undeniable source of all matter, all energy, and all laws of nature.

So, the Universe produced and contains all things. But is it possible the Universe is also self-aware? Is it possible the Universe is conscious? To all appearances, that would seem absurd. Outer space seems like trillions of pinpoints of light within a vast, empty void. It seems more like an object than a Person.

Yet recent discoveries in the field of cosmology paint a different picture. The emergence of the Holographic Principle (Basso, 2002; Bekenstein, 2003; Bohm, 1980; 't Hooft, 1993), and the application of that Principle to the Universe as a whole reveals a different kind of Cosmos. Princeton physicist Juan Maldacena's "AdS/CFT Correspondence" (2005) portrays the Universe as a kind of hologram (Bow, 2022; Herzog, 2023; Susskind, 2017). The 3 dimensional world we live in is mirrored by information on a 2 dimensional surface surrounding it. In other words, the Universe is reflecting itself.

Moreover, Maldacena (2005) tells us that everything, *literally* everything in the 3D world is reflected on the 2D surface. So, it's not just objects and their locations, but also sensations and perceptions that are contained on that outermost bound. In effect, we have in the 3D world and the 2D surface what looks a lot like a body and a mind.

### 3. I AM

In Exodus 3:14, Moses is asking God for His name, so that Moses can return to the Israelites and tell them whom he spoke to. God is quoted as responding, "I AM THAT I AM." What does the author of these words mean by them? What is he saying?

Joseph Benson, an English Methodist Minister in the late 1700's, wrote in his "Commentaries" (cited in Internet Archive, 2014) "I AM THAT I AM" signifies God

*is self-existent: He has his being of himself, and has no dependence on any other . . . that he is the fountain of all being and perfection and that from him all things derive their existence.*

Benson is telling us the meaning of "I AM THAT I AM." It signifies God is "of himself," meaning He created Himself. And it signifies "from Him all things," meaning everything comes from Him. "I AM THAT I AM" is the essence of Being. If you or I were to declare, "I am," what we'd be saying is, "I exist." But if said in the context of nothingness - no time, no space, no anything - the meaning of the words become "I AM Existence."

These words are consistent with a Universe that created itself and that contains everything there is.

### 4. What Caused the First Cause?

One of the leading founders of Quantum Mechanics, Physicist Max Planck tells us:

*I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness (1931).*

If Planck is right; if consciousness is "fundamental," then, this is how the Universe most likely began. It began with: "I AM." The "I" is the Universe. The "AM" is Existence. "I AM" is Self-awareness. A self-aware Universe would be God realizing His own Existence. "I AM" would be what caused the first cause.

### 5. How Did the First Cause Cause Itself?

If the Universe began with the concept "I AM," then, where did that concept come from? At the instant of the Big Bang, there was no past. There was no time; there was no space. So, from where could "I AM" possibly have emerged? Simple answer: the future.

Consider there was no "before" before the Big Bang. There was no past. But there would be a future. And it's not a possible future or a likely future. It's a definite future. How can we know? Well, here we are.

Even though that future will occur over time, the *concept* of that future can be timeless, just like the concept of the circle or the concept of truth.

The concept of the future means the concept of the Universe. Otherwise, there could be no future. The concept of the Universe means the concept of God, if God is the Universe. The concept of God means the concept of "I AM," if "I AM" is the realization of God.

The concept of "I AM" evokes the awareness of Existence. The awareness of Existence manifests itself in the Big Bang.

## 6. Conclusion

The theory presented here rests on several premises. These include: the validity of the Big Bang; the absence of time and space before the Big Bang; the claim the Universe is God; the assertion the first cause caused itself; the certainty of the future.

The most doubtful of these premises is: the Universe is God. But if that premise is wrong, then "I AM" does not work. If as Genesis tells us, God *created* the Universe, then He and the Universe are separate entities, and "I AM" does not work. It's only if God *is* the Universe, that "I AM" makes sense. In that case, the assertion of Self is a realization of the Universe.

As to the claim about the future and the past, one might argue that *any* future implicates a past. However, the future "I AM" not only implicates a past, but also explains how that past came into being.

"I AM" in concept evokes "I AM" in fact.

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