



Last year's garden party
Photo: John Kingston

Chairman's Garden Party

Saturday 9th August 3.00-5.30pm. Please note start time. This social event is NOT at Moordown Community Centre. It is in David Warden's garden. Address supplied when you RSVP via Meetup or email or phone to confirm that you are definitely coming.

We hope to indulge in the quintessential English pastime of an *al fresco* Summer Cream Tea. (OK, *al fresco* is Italian!) Weather forecast is 24°C and sunny at the time of writing, hence the later start. There's plenty of shade in our garden or bring a brolly!

Please note the start time is 3pm and finish time is 5.30pm. There is no parking in our drive or street – you will need to plan your parking and allow another few minutes to walk to the venue (please let David know if you need disabled parking and access).

This event is complimentary for members and guests but please bring cash or card if you would like to make a donation to our charity Appeal for a local foodbank and Humanist Schools in Uganda.

Please tell David if you need gluten-free scones or if you have any other allergies. Please don't just turn up unannounced. We are catering for specific numbers.

chairman@dorset.humanist.org.uk or text David on 07910 886629



Humanists International

Delegates to the Humanists International event in Luxembourg rounded off the weekend by “doing the Happy Human”! David Warden sometimes gets young children to “do the happy human” as a fun exercise to raise awareness of the international humanist symbol, the happy human.

Andrew Copson stood down as President of Humanists International after ten years and David Warden contributed a short video clip

to a collection of tributes. Maggie Ardiente has now taken over as President of Humanists International. Maggie has been associated with the humanist movement in the US and internationally for many years.

Humanists International General Assembly adopted the [Luxembourg Declaration on artificial intelligence and human values](#), outlining ten principles needed to align artificial intelligence with humanist values.

Dates for your diary

Thursday 7 th August 7.30pm	Moon in the Square	Pub social
Saturday 9 th August 3.00-5.30pm	Social	Chairman’s Garden Party
Friday 15 th August 7.30pm	Westcliff Hotel	Hotel bar social
Wednesday 20 th August 10.30am	Westbourne	Coffee morning at Coffee#1 Westbourne 86 Poole Road
Saturday 13 th September 2pm	Moordown	Jessica Toale MP will speak about life as the new MP for Bournemouth West
Please check all events nearer the time on Meetup in case of any changes.		

Scientific responses to the Cosmological Argument for the existence of God

At our June evening event at the Westcliff Hotel, Christian speaker Dave Pegg explained two arguments for the existence of God: the Cosmological Argument (to be precise, a particular formulation of it called the 'Kalam' argument, from an Arabic word meaning speech or theology), and the 'fine-tuning' argument. Scientist Geoff Kirby from West Dorset Humanists was the main responder with an additional paper read by Ron March on Naturalism. The following report summarises the main ideas and responses to the Cosmological Argument..



Dave Pegg's explanation of the Cosmological Argument

This argument has a simple structure: two premises and a conclusion.

- Everything that begins to exist has a cause
- The universe began to exist
- Therefore, the universe has a cause

We can question the premises, of course. Are they true? Are they reasonable? But if both are accepted, then the conclusion logically follows. Let's look briefly at each premise.

Premise 1: Everything that begins to exist has a cause

This seems to be supported by both everyday experience and scientific reasoning. Things don't just pop into existence without explanation. You don't walk into your kitchen and find a tiger has appeared on the countertop with no cause! William Lane Craig, whom some of you may know, often presents this argument in debates and lectures. I've borrowed some of his phrasing because I find it helpful, although I'm skipping over much of the technical detail for brevity.

Premise 2: The universe began to exist

This is widely accepted in scientific circles. The current consensus is that the universe began around 13.8 billion years ago with the Big Bang. Not every scientist agrees, of course—some hold to models involving an infinite past. But the prevailing view is that our universe had a definite beginning in time.

There are also philosophical reasons to support this idea. For instance, many philosophers argue that an actual infinite series of past physical events is impossible. Thought experiments illustrate how paradoxical it would be to have an infinite past: if the number of days before today were truly infinite, how could we ever have arrived at today?

That line of reasoning—the impossibility of an actual infinite—is central to the philosophical case for a beginning. Combined with the scientific evidence for an expanding universe, it strongly suggests that the universe did have a starting point.

So, if we accept the premises—that everything that begins to exist has a cause, and that the universe began to exist—then the conclusion follows: the universe must have a cause.

From there, we can reason a little further. If the universe had a cause, what can we say about the nature of that cause? ►

Philosophers and theologians have argued that this cause must possess certain attributes: it must be timeless, spaceless, immaterial, uncaused, and immensely powerful. Why these particular qualities? Because if the cause of the universe brought space and time into existence, it cannot itself be bound by space or time. It must exist outside the space-time framework that characterises our universe. In that sense, the cause must be timeless and spaceless. It must also be immaterial—because material things exist in space and time, and we're talking about something prior to both. It must be uncaused, because if it had a cause, we'd simply be pushing the question back another step. And of course, it must be unimaginably powerful to bring the entire universe into being.

Now, to be clear, this argument doesn't prove the existence of God—not definitively—and certainly not the Christian God. What it does is point to the need for a first cause that possesses these qualities.

But I would say this: if it's not God, then it sounds remarkably like him. The description—a timeless, spaceless, immaterial, uncaused, powerful cause—lines up quite closely with many traditional conceptions of God. It certainly doesn't sound like nothing. Nothing, by definition, has no qualities, no power, and no explanatory force.

This brings us back to that big, age-old question: what caused the universe? The cosmological argument reframes that question. It suggests the key issue is not whether the universe was caused, but rather: what kind of cause could bring the universe into being? What timeless, spaceless, immaterial, powerful something—or someone—set it all in motion?

The argument doesn't force a conclusion, but it does push us to consider that if the universe began to exist, and it wasn't self-caused, then something else—outside of space and time—must be responsible. And that's where the cosmological argument ultimately leads us.



Geoff Kirby's responses to the Cosmological Argument

There are nine assumptions in the Kalam Cosmological Argument. Each is claimed to follow logically from the previous arguments:

1. Everything that begins has a cause

This proposition has been the subject of long-standing philosophical and scientific debate. In particular, Quantum Theory is often cited as a challenge to the idea that everything must have a cause. Some interpretations suggest that particles can be created spontaneously from what is called the relativistic quantum field-theoretical vacuum state. Please don't ask me to explain what that means! In short, science does not currently provide a definitive answer to whether everything that begins must have a cause. However, the prevailing view is that Quantum Theory does not definitively rule out the possibility. For now, we may have to leave the question to philosophers, theologians, and scientists — to keep scratching their heads over it.

2. The universe began to exist

This is a no-brainer as we observe an expanding universe and everyone agrees that there must have been a start to this expansion. Moving on to the third and fourth assumptions :

3. The universe has a cause and 4. The cause of the existence of our universe is uncaused otherwise there would be an infinite chain of causes

These are the third and fourth assumptions behind the Kalam Cosmological Argument. Supporters accept them as foundational, but it's important to understand that they are not logical necessities. Whether the universe had a cause depends entirely on what was ►

present — or not present — when our universe came into existence.

While the expansion of our universe is beyond doubt and must have had a beginning, this doesn't automatically mean that the universe itself had a singular cause. One alternative is the "Big Bounce" theory, which proposes that our universe formed from the remnants of a previous universe. According to this view, there has been an infinite cycle of universes — expanding, slowing down, collapsing into unimaginably dense states, and then rebounding into new universes.

The idea of an infinite sequence of universes makes many philosophers and theologians uncomfortable, but mathematicians and scientists tend to have no such qualms. In fact, infinities are everywhere in science. The Big Bounce theory may have fallen out of favour — our universe is expanding at an accelerating rate and may continue to do so forever. If that's the case, it could exist for an infinite future. Over trillions of years, the stars will die and cool to absolute zero. Nothing appears likely to reverse or halt this process. Yet cosmologists are comfortable predicting this infinite timeline of decay.

5. The cause of our universe must be timeless, spaceless, immaterial and enormously powerful to be able to create the universe

This is another key assumption of the Kalam Cosmological Argument. The reasoning goes: since time and space began with our universe, whatever caused it must exist outside time and space — hence timeless, spaceless, and immaterial — and must be immensely powerful to bring a universe into being.

At first glance, this seems logical. If time and space are unique to our universe, then whatever lies beyond it must exist in a timeless, immaterial void. But there's a serious flaw in this assumption: it ignores the possibility that our universe is embedded in a

different space-time altogether, unrelated to our own. This alternative is not considered in the Kalam argument — and when we do consider it, the fifth assumption collapses. Our universe could have originated within another universe's space and time. In fact, a new theory published just this month (hot off the press!) proposes that our universe may exist inside a black hole — that it emerged from the gravitational singularity at the core of another universe's black hole. If true, our universe originated within a space-time framework entirely separate from our own. Sorry! No room for a spaceless, timeless deity there!

6. The cause of the universe must be personal, possessing non-deterministic agency, in creating the universe from a timeless state

The question of whether there is an interventionist god is outside the brief of this discussion. My search for evidence of such a deity has been unsuccessful since I gave up belief in gods in 1951. Maybe this could be the topic of a future discussion?

7. The cause of the universe must be singular, in the absence of good reasons to believe in one or more uncaused causes

This step is illogical since it can be reversed to say: "The cause of the universe must be multiple, in the absence of good reasons to believe in a singular uncaused cause." Surely the more gods the better? "A job shared is a job done better," as my dear old grandmother used to say. Some commentators supporting the premise that there must be a singular deity cite Occam's Razor: "When faced with a choice of explanations, choose the simplest." Occam's Razor is not a valid scientific or logical philosophical tool for examining the validation of theories. These have to be judged on their predictive accuracy when applied to real situations. Many examples can be cited to show where the more complicated option turns out to be the right one. ►

8. If the universe has a cause, then an uncaused, personal Creator of the universe exists who, without [outside/beyond] the universe, is beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless and enormously powerful

Wow! A whole lot of assumptions have suddenly appeared from nowhere – just like our universe?

9. Therefore, an uncaused, personal Creator of our universe exists, who, without [outside/beyond] the universe, is beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless and enormously powerful

I believe, and you may not agree with me, that those conclusions do not follow from those Kalam assumptions that I described earlier. My summary is that the Kalam chain of propositions is flawed – for example in proposing an uncaused god engaging in a vastly complex caused manufacturing process to produce a material universe outside of space and time. And all done as if by magic without explanation. Just like that!

The Kalam argument makes no testable predictions (unlike scientific theories) and so is a weak and flawed argument.



The Big Conversation has started...

In last month's bulletin we published ten questions to help our members reflect on how we can make every event welcoming, inspiring, and worth coming to — every single time. We've had 12 responses so far and we're publishing a small selection of your feedback here. You can still take part by picking up a questionnaire at one of our events.

What makes you look forward to attending our events?

Stimulating conversations with like-minded people/learning something new/I love the friends I have made/diversity of attendees

What puts you off attending more often?

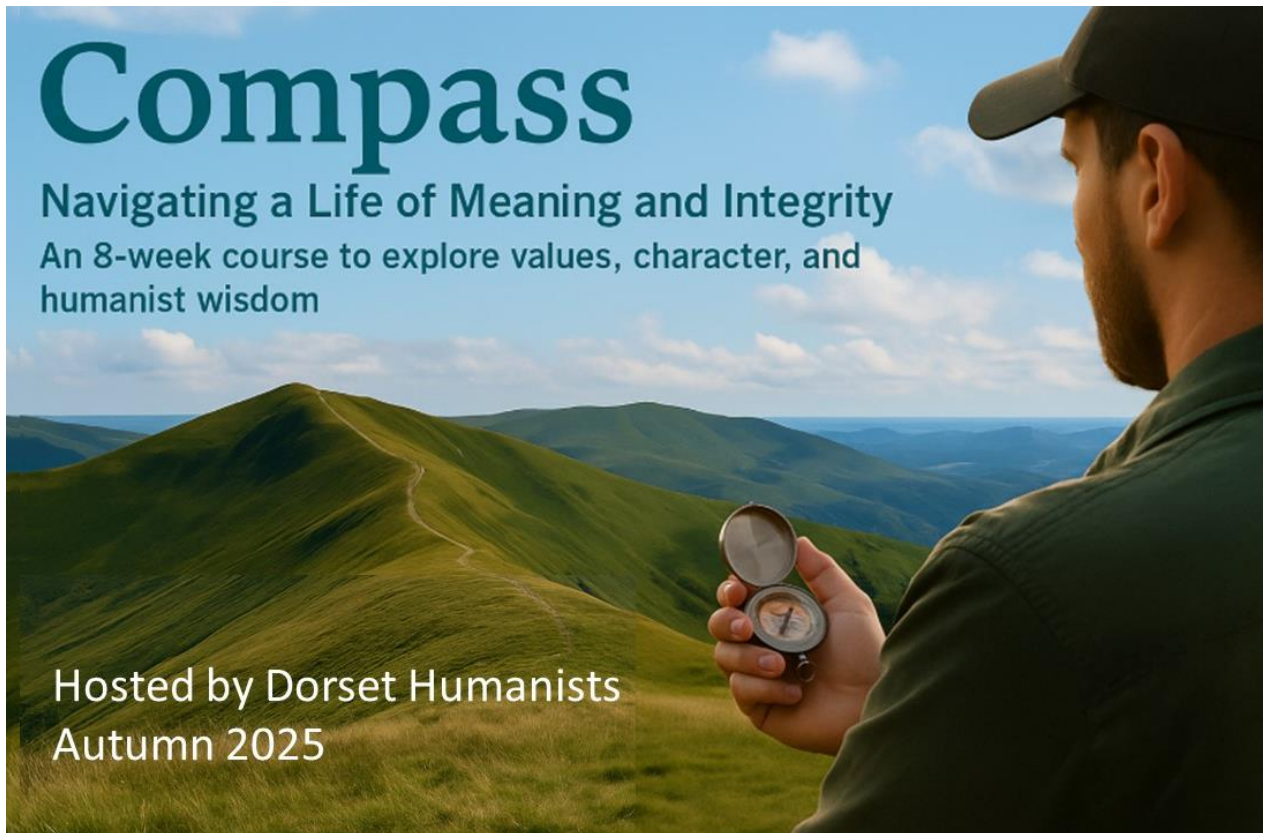
Lack of time/life gets in the way/a risk to drive alone in the dark at our age/only conflict with doing other stuff/nothing – I will attend everything if possible/tasks at home/often busy on Sat/not liking speaker topics/members who are overly controversial in their "beliefs" and are misinformed especially about science

What was the most inspiring or enjoyable humanist event you've ever attended? What made it great?

Choir concerts at Xmas/Daniel's talk on information/Barney Maunder-Taylor on probability/Yuletide dinner/I like the more intensive, group-orientated events such as 7 Deadly Sins and Quest/trip to Down House/the 1st one – I had no idea what it was about but felt I had met a group of people who were interested in ideas and open to learning/Stoicism talk

What could be improved?

More interaction/sometimes sound not good/more external speakers/change of Sat venue/greater variety of events & topics/music



Dorset Humanists' mission is to create a welcoming, thoughtful community where people can explore how to live well without religion — through shared values and open conversation. In support of this aim, we're running an inspiring and potentially life-changing series of discussions in the autumn. The whole course is called "Compass" and you're invited to sign up for the whole series for maximum impact.

Humanism can be defined as "living a good life without supernatural beliefs" but what does it mean to live a "good life" — not just in theory, but in practice? Together, we'll ask searching and sometimes uncomfortable questions about society, personality, human nature, good and evil, the human species, and our evolutionary programming. We'll invite honest reflection and open conversation, drawing on practical wisdom from philosophy, psychology, literature, and life experience.

- What can we learn from the great moral thinkers of the past—and today?
- Has modern society lost its moral compass?

- Does our deep sense of right and wrong have an evolutionary explanation?
- Does my personality define my character?
- What does it take to be a truly excellent human being?

If you're curious about how humanist values can help you live with greater clarity, kindness, and purpose — and contribute more fully to our community and the world around you — this course is for you. It starts on Tuesday 23rd September and continues for eight consecutive Tuesday evenings. To express an interest, email chairman@dorset.humanist.org.uk or text 07910 886629 and tell us what you would like to gain from the course.

To secure your place:

- £10 for members payable in cash at one of our events
- £15 for non-members which includes complimentary membership of Dorset Humanists for one year.
- Concessions for unwaged



A point of view

David Warden

Did Geoff Kirby absolutely nail the Kalam Cosmological Argument? I've been friends with Dave Pegg for many years and I often hear him repeating the line about a "timeless, spaceless, immaterial, uncaused, and immensely powerful cause of the universe" which happens to look rather like the God he believes in. Geoff said "there's a serious flaw in this assumption: it ignores the possibility that our universe is embedded in a different space-time altogether, unrelated to our own... Our universe could have originated within another universe's space and time." I think there's another flaw in the argument which is that it makes no sense to claim that time, space and matter, if they came into being 13.8 billion years ago, must have been caused by something timeless, spaceless, and immaterial because this sounds like a definition of nothing – or the God that Dave wants us to believe in. Some models suggest that the universe could have emerged from a "quantum fluctuation" in a "quantum vacuum". This vacuum is not "nothing" but a seething background of energy governed by quantum laws. Other theories suggest that the universe is just one bubble in an eternally inflating multiverse spawning countless universes, each with possibly different physical constants. Sean Carroll and Alan Guth have explored time-symmetric models in which the Big Bang is a middle point of time, not the start. On either side of it, time flows in opposite directions. Carroll has argued that the universe just exists – a brute fact. Science has no definitive answers but its speculative theories sound a great deal more plausible than the nonsensical idea that the universe was caused by something "timeless, spaceless, and immaterial" which sounds suspiciously like a God.

We're familiar with the concept of a "carbon footprint", but what about a "moral footprint"? This idea was suggested by the AI machine Copilot in an exchange with one of our *Humanistically Speaking* magazine writers. It's a powerful metaphor which suggests that the way we live our lives from day to day leaves a "moral footprint" on the world, for good or ill. Humanists often talk somewhat glibly about "living a good life without God" but what does it mean to live a good life and be a good person? Does it mean busying ourselves with good deeds, or sacrificing ourselves for others, or being an agreeable people pleaser? What if our brains are deficient in empathy, or our personalities make us argumentative and confrontational? We'll be having some honest discussions about such questions in our Autumn series called *Compass*. I hope you will join us.

Let's continue the discussion in our new chatroom

<https://talk.dorsethumanists.org/>