

Perhaps the difficulty reaches all the way to the title. It is, after all, a very loaded, as well as a very polyvalent, term. How much of the book's content derives from the art and architecture it purportedly discusses, and how much from the dialectical structure that Taylor imposes on it? Is it really necessary to read "disfiguring" through the lens of Hegel's double negation (Taylor actually cites Freud) and the *telos* it imposes? If it is, then are there not less metaphysically laden, more subtle and serviceable ways to discuss artistic and architectural styles and the changes they undergo? If disfiguring actually governs the self-conceptions of some artists and architects, as for some postmodernists it does, might it not be more interesting to interrogate that notion rather than to adopt it? What judgments do such artists and architects—or theologians—make simply by using this vocabulary? What claims to self-importance do they advance? Why?

In any case, Taylor's argument about art and architecture suggests that Hegelian negation plays a crucial role in *geistliche*—aesthetic, intellectual—development. His argument about theology violates that process. Taylor moves from ontotheology directly to a/theology, from theoesthetics to a/theoesthetics—in crude terms, from thesis to synthesis without ever truly developing an antithesis. But an alternative does present itself, one that may take the process of negation more seriously than Taylor does and one that certainly scales the fences of "high" art, welcomes substantive social analysis and critique, and recognizes no preordained, dialectical *telos* in artistic change. On that alternative, we might simply dispense, at least for the time being, with aesthetics and theology altogether.

Gregory D. Alles
Western Maryland College

Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology By William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith Oxford University Press, 1993 342 pages \$45.00

What is the theological significance of big bang cosmology? According to Pope Pius XII, in a 1951 address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the big bang is unforeseen evidence for a divine creator, the kind of evidence that even scientists can admit as impressive. The better part of three decades later, in 1978, astronomer Robert Jastrow reluctantly conceded that big bang cosmology was confirmation of the Genesis account of creation. It is as if the ingenious scientists had clambered up an impossibly sheer mountain side and reached the peak, exhausted, only to discover that "a band of theologians [had] been sitting there for centuries" (*God and the Astronomers*, 116).

In fact, neither the science, nor the philosophy, nor the theological implications of big bang cosmology is straightforward, a point that makes the judgments of both Pius XII and Jastrow—not to mention the apocryphal mountain-climbing scientists—seem somewhat hasty. *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology* aims to clarify the scientific and philosophical complexities involved in assessing the theological import of big bang cosmology.

The book is an extended three-part debate between two philosophers, both with considerable expertise in the physics of big bang cosmology. Most of the chapters in the book are reprints or adaptations of already published work. The focus of the volume is quite sharp in spite of this, thanks to some good adaptations and the fact that Craig and Smith sometimes engaged each other in the original articles.

Part I leads off with a statement of Craig's argument for the existence of a creator God based on the finitude of the past—an argument allegedly strengthened by big bang cosmology—and continues with five other essays, alternating between Smith and Craig. This theistic cosmological argument is treated at much greater length in Craig's *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*, which also includes a history of the argument in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scholarship. The condensation of it here is quite useful, though many details necessarily have to be omitted.

The first phase of the argument in Part I focuses on the contention that the idea of a physically real universe with an infinite past is incoherent. Whereas infinities can be *imagined* easily enough—Cantor's theory of transfinite numbers is proof enough of that—according to Craig, they can't be *actual*. This argument applies not only to the impossibility of actually infinite aggregates of things, Craig urges, but also to an actually infinite temporal series, such as a universe with an infinite age. Actual infinities have been much debated ever since Zeno defended Parmenides' contention that relative motion was impossible with paradoxes based on the assumption that a finite amount of space was divisible into an actually infinite number of real points. Atomists such as Democritus refuted Zeno by arguing that space was in fact empty, with nothing actual in it at all, so that there were after all no actual infinities.

The debate has continued in a number of directions up to the present time. Craig argues that an actual infinite of any kind—including an actually infinite past—is impossible. Smith counters that it is not, formally speaking, impossible, but that the universe in all likelihood (thanks to big bang cosmology) has a finite past anyway. To my mind, debates of this book pay insufficient attention to ordinality over the logical possibility of an actual (cardinal) infinite. For example, while it seems clear that a temporal series of events is a collection *extended* by successive addition, Craig's premise that “the temporal series of events is a collection *formed* by successive addition” (30; my italics) arguably applies only to sets such as {0,1,2,3, . . . }, and not to sets such as { . . . , -3, -2, -1, 0}. If this were so, it would interfere with Craig's argument that “the temporal series of events cannot be an actual infinite” (30). In any event, this is an interesting extension of one of the longest running philosophical debates in Western philosophy.

The second phase of Craig's argument in Part I concerns whether the universe, which by his argument must have a finite past, is caused. Craig argues that the universe is caused because 1) big bang cosmology strongly suggests this, and 2) we can know merely from reflection, and independently of experience, that whatever begins to exist has a cause. Smith disputes both points and anticipates the next section of the book as he does so.

Part II focuses on Smith's argument that big bang cosmology facilitates a cosmological argument for atheism. Craig and Smith then alternate in attacking and defending Smith's thesis. Smith contends that big bang cosmology is inconsistent with the hypothesis of an existent creator God because it implies a real physical singularity, and this in turn 1) involves the utter unpredictability (even for God) of the universe, which is a state of affairs not worthy of a perfect being (who ought to be a perfect predictor), and 2) requires acts of supernatural intervention that are irrational. Craig refutes Smith's argument by denying that the singularity is physically real. Even if it were, real, however, Craig argues that Smith's contentions are either mistaken or unproblematic.

Part III offers opposing interpretations of the significance of Stephen Hawking's quantum cosmology for the question of the existence of a creator God. As technical as Hawking's cosmological model is, its general significance can be indicated in hand-waving fashion. By describing time as emerging only gradually from a space-like dimension in the earliest phase of the expanding universe, Hawking is able to envisage a cosmos without a beginning, in the strict sense. This can be thought of as bad news for theists if they depend on the construal of "beginning" that is excluded in Hawking's theory. Or it might be a matter of indifference if theists are content to speak about creation of a finite universe in such a way as to avoid assuming a beginning (as Robert Russell does in the *Quantum Cosmology* volume mentioned below).

Craig argues that Hawking's cosmology is not a viable alternative to the idea of a created beginning for the universe, and supports his argument by positing that Hawking's theory (which includes such ideas as mathematically imaginary time) is physically unintelligible. Smith counters that Hawking's theory is physically intelligible after all (for example, it does not require that imaginary time be physically realized) and is more plausible than the creator God idea of the origins of the universe.

The intense debate over this general issue since the 1960's within the literature of the rapidly growing specialization of science and religion is insufficiently recognized by the authors of this book. However, the debate in these quarters has tended, on the whole, to be rather philosophically imprecise and has focused more on clarifying what exactly would count as evidence for or against creation as it is affirmed by the dominant Western religious traditions. For example, Langdon Gilkey's seminal *Maker of Heaven and Earth* (1959) argues that the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* fundamentally involves only the assertion of ontological dependence of the cosmos on God and is neutral toward the details of creation—such as whether the universe has a finite age, whether creation involved something like the big bang, and so on. While the theological sophistication of this ongoing debate far surpasses that of *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, the book under review brings welcome precision to the philosophical questions implicated in thinking of the big bang as evidence for a creator. Now there are at least two possible reactions to this:

On the one hand, those looking for a sophisticated theological treatment of theism and atheism or a nuanced discussion of the meaning of *creatio ex nihilo*

as components in the argument of this book will be disappointed and would be better off consulting Gilkey's book or essays in some of the volumes edited by Robert John Russell, *et al.*, including *Physics, Philosophy and Theology* (1988) and *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature* (1993). Even in the more theologically informed literature, however, it is still possible for those sensitive to metaphysical and normative dimensions of the study of religion to be perplexed by the presence of a quaint irrelevance in these debates. This impression is much stronger in the case of *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, in which the terms 'theism' and 'atheism' seem to have lost all of the immensely important nuances that careful discussion has brought to them. The sensibilities of much Protestant theology after Paul Tillich, of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, of radical Jewish and Christian theology, in which the conceptual content of theism and atheism merge so intriguingly, do not register at all in this book. This may be a common enough problem in much contemporary philosophy of religion, but a review in the context of this journal is obliged to state the point anyway.

On the other hand, those frustrated with the many apparently intransigent philosophical unclarities surrounding the issue of the status of big bang cosmology as evidence for a creator will be delighted to read this volume. Consulting William Lane Craig's *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (1979) is also a good idea for such readers.

Wesley J. Wildman
Boston University

Blues and Evil By Jon Michael Spencer University of Tennessee Press, 1993 177 pages \$18.95

Building on his work on the blues in *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (1990), Jon Michael Spencer in *Blues and Evil* challenges both the scholarly evaluation of the blues as atheistic and its popular characterization as the 'devil's music'. Spencer argues that the existing criticism of the blues has either completely denied or merely suggested its religious dimensions. Critics, unable to capture and represent its "elusive cultural element" (xvi), have not looked beyond its "eros" to its "deeper spiritual ethos" (xiii). The blues, he explains, presents a holistic vision of human life, "the truth of our being" (32–33), forged from the pain of black experience. Spencer offers a critical approach to the blues that illustrates that it, "is replete with mythologies that reveal blues singers' religious thought on the origin and description of evil, that it is a music that is theological and that talks about evil in folk theological language and that it is a music that posits 'theodicies' reconciling the seeming incongruence of evil existing in a world believed to be created and ruled by a good God" (xxv–xxvi). This statement indicates the structure of the book. In the three chapters, Spencer examines the mythologies, theologies, and theodicies of the blues. In superb concluding chapter, he shows us how those mythologies, theologies, and theodicies change as the blues moves from the rural South to the North particularly to



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