

## Anthony Kenny on Why is there Something rather than Nothing?

From: What I Believe by Anthony Kenny, Continuum, London – New York, 2006

The question religionists say God is the answer to, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" makes no sense for it is about the origin of the universe. The proposition, "there is nothing" is incoherent. There is no need to ask if incoherent propositions are false. And that is exactly what the question is asking. It is not the existence of the universe that calls for an explanation. It is its coming into existence. PAGE 28

### MY COMMENT

He observes that the question includes the thought that there might have been nothing. For Kenny, in that case, the assertion, "There is nothing" makes no sense. Therefore the question makes no sense. It only looks sensible but it is not.

He means that if there is nothing there is no God or nothing that can become something. He notices that the question assumes that there can be nothing at all and yet something can appear. He correctly observes that this is incoherent.

He is not saying that there is any logical problem if there were nothing at all. It is only a problem if you think something can come but not from anything.

To ask, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" is as silly as asking, "Why is grass green and not pink?" Colours are realities. Existence is a reality. The analogy is valid.

There are two versions of the question.

One is that the universe must have been started off so it means, "Why is there a universe when there could have been none?"

Two is that the universe doesn't need to exist and that even if it never had a beginning something is creating it right now. The question then means, "The universe for every moment it exists is being created. If God stopped creating the universe would become nothing again. Why is there a universe now rather than none?"

This view denies that the universe was made aeons ago and left to run for itself. It says that the universe whether it had a beginning or not needs something to prevent it turning into nothing for it doesn't need to exist. So the universe that existed a moment ago is the same universe that exists now. But it is made not by one act of creation. Each moment is a separate act of creation. The acts happen in such a way that they amount to continuous creation. Rather than creation having happened in the past, this view says that creation is happening separately each moment of time. It is happening now and God is creating all the time.

God could give the universe the power to run without him. He could give it the power to be the reason for its own existence.

If a thing can be the reason for its own existence then there is no need for the God hypothesis at all.

The question would be more accurately put as "How is there something rather than nothing?" Believers in God cannot explain how God makes things so they have no right to manipulate people with the why something rather than nothing question to get believers or convince believers.

Why is there a God rather than no God? That is the question that needs to be asked next. The question, why is there something rather than nothing, doesn't get us anywhere. To answer God to it as the religious do, is just a lie which doesn't warm us to them.

Suppose the question could be answered only by the God hypothesis. It wouldn't prove the God of the Christians but only an impersonal power that makes things exist. To say it proved God would be going too far even if there were a God. You have to go by evidence and you must not go too far. You must not read too much into evidence. The use of the question as an argument for God among Christians speaks of their deceitfulness.

Let us leave the last word to Simon Blackburn.

Modern logic ...prompts suspicion that the question of why something is either ill-formed or profitless, since any intelligible answer will merely invite the same question. A central mistake in the area is to treat Being as a noun that identifies a particularly deep subject-matter. This is parallel to treating Nothing as a name of a particular thing, perhaps an object of dread or fear” (page 40, Being, Dictionary of Philosophy, Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, 1996).

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