

Does the Scale of the Universe Count against God's Existence?

Does what we know about the age, size, and relative emptiness of our universe constitute evidence against God's existence? Proponents of what is frequently called the 'argument from scale' think so. The argument from scale is often heard from bar stools and coffee house chairs in arguments against the existence of God. They claim that the astronomically long period of time that the universe has existed and its sheer vastness and emptiness constitutes evidence against the existence of a theistic God who values intelligent free beings such as humans. Were such a God to exist, they reason, human life would have had to be much more prominent in both time and space, rather than occupying only the seemingly negligible amount of time and tiny bit of space it does now. This talk will evaluate the argument.

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1. Introduction

- A. Some astronomical evidence

- B. Twofold relevance

2. Considerations of Scale

- A. Some examples of atheistic arguments on the basis of the scale of the universe:
Shermer, Carroll, Everitt, and Philipse

- B. Various emphases: discrepancy, irrelevance, inhospitability

3. What Is the Argument?

- A. Everitt's version

- B. A refined version

C. A version in terms of probability

4. Evaluating the Argument Step 1

- A. The idea that probably, if there is no God, large parts of the universe would be inhospitable to humans
- B. The main problem here

5. Evaluating the Argument Step 2

- A. The idea that large parts of the universe are inhospitable to intelligent free beings like humans
- B. Two problems

6. Evaluating the Argument Step 3

- A. The idea that if God created the universe with the purpose of creating humans, large parts of the universe would *not* be inhospitable to humans
- B. First argument for this idea: more is better
 - i. Two problems
- C. Second argument for this idea: what is valuable is visible
 - ii. Two problems
- D. An argument against this idea: a variety of divine purposes

E. Two reasons to be skeptical that we can know this idea

5. Conclusion

Suggested Readings:

Carroll, Sean M. (2005). “Why (Almost All) Cosmologists Are Atheists”, *Faith and Philosophy* 22.5, 622–635.

Everitt, Nicholas. (2004). *The Non-existence of God* (London and New York: Routledge).

Kahane, Guy. (2014). “Our Cosmic Insignificance”, *Noûs* 47.2, 745–772.

Philipse, Herman. (2012). *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).