Causal Finitism and the Kalām Argument

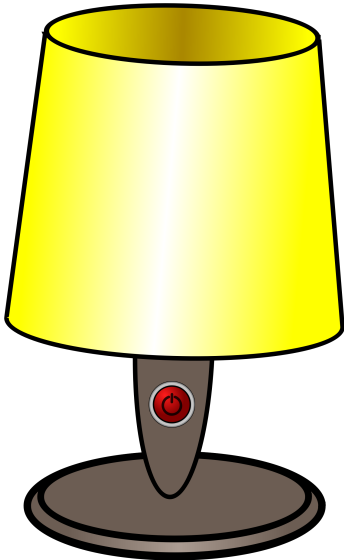### Alexander R. Pruss

Department of Philosophy
Baylor University

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The strange and the impossible

- No one doubts that infinity is strange.
- But the strange is not the impossible.
- Proof:

HEINRICH HARDER.

Warmup: Thomson's Lamp

The Grim Reaper Paradox

Guessing dice: The game

- Every day from eternity you play this game:
  - You guess whether you will roll a six or not.
  - You roll a fair and memoryless die.
  - If you were wrong, you're tortured.
  - Die is not affected by your guesses.
- Obviously Correct Strategy: Never guess 6.
- No strategy using information from the past will be better than the Obviously Correct Strategy, on pain of something like the Gambler's Fallacy.

Guessing dice: A better strategy

- Absurdly, one can leverage past data to find a strategy that (a) in some possible situations is better than Never-Six, and (b) is never worse.
- "Almost always" = "Finitely many exceptions."
- Better Strategy:
    - If you almost always had sixes, guess six.
    - Otherwise, guess non-six.
- In most worlds, you'll have infinitely many non-sixes and infinitely many sixes. Same result as Never-Six.
- But if you almost always have six, Better Strategy gives only finitely many tortures, but Never-Six gives infinitely many!

Causal Finitism, I

- Finitism would rule out all these paradoxes.
- Finitism conflicts with mathematics and with eternalism and is too strong.
- Causal Finitism: Not possible for infinitely many causes to impinge on a single event.
- Infinitely many Grim Reapers observations of victim impinge on the life at end of experiment.
- Better die-rolling strategy requires one's knowledge to be affected by infinitely many rolls.

Causal Finitism, II

- Causal Finitism is a simple principle that rules out many paradoxes.
- But it allows for actual infinites, just as mathematics requires.
- There is no good competitor.
- Probably, it's true.

A version of Kalām

1. There is a cause.
2. If there is a cause and every cause has a cause, there is circularity in causation or an infinite causal regress.
3. Circularity in causation is impossible.
4. Infinite causal regresses are impossible. (By causal finitism)
5. So not every cause has a cause.
6. So there is an uncaused cause.
7. Every contingent thing has a cause.
8. So there is a necessary being.

Et hoc dicimus deum?