

A summary of the Cosmological argument according to Thomas Aquinas and Copleston.

Copleston made it clearer in an argument with Bertrand Russell in 1948. God is not the cause of itself, but it contains its own sufficient reason for existence. When questioned what could be counted as a sufficient reason, Copleston defines it as "an explanation adequate for existence of some particular being. Cause can be a kind of sufficient reason for contingent beings, but God has a sufficient reason in itself, but not a cause. If one accepts the main points of the argument, i.e.: The Universe has a reason for existing, and that must exist outside of itself, then, as Copleston defined this necessary being as "a being that must and cannot not exist".

Bertrand Russell argues against both of the Cosmological arguments put forward by Aquinas and Copleston.

Outline cosmological argument presented by Aquinas and discuss strengths and weaknesses.

For what reasons have some rejected the cosmological argument? How far is it possible to regard it as a strong argument?

"Whatever is moved, is moved by another" according to Anthony Kenny Newton's first law of motion in which movement can be explained by the body's own inertia from previous motion disproves Aquinas argument. Animals and humans are examples of beings able to move themselves used to prove this point. This however isn't true because for movement to be possible a force must have been applied at some stage in the process even if there is no immediate evidence of that force.

How valid do you think the Cosmological Argument is as proof for the existence of God?

The cosmological argument is a classical argument for the existence of God. It is also referred to as the first cause argument. The cosmological argument concludes God's existence from a posteriori premise. A posteriori means an argument in which the truth of a proposition may only be known to be true after empirical data has been used to prove the proposition true or false. The argument is a posteriori because it is based upon what we can see in the world and universe. The argument is based upon the fact that there was a first cause behind the existence of the universe. The classic, basic cosmological argument is as follows. Things come into existence because something caused them to occur, and that things are caused to exist, but they do not have to exist. There is a chain of events that goes back to the beginning of time, and time began when the universe was created. We know the universe came about around 15 billion years ago. There must have been a first cause that brought the universe into creation. This first cause must have necessary existence to cause the contingent universe. God has necessary existence, this means God exists outside our space and time, however, he is able to create within it. Because of this, God is the first cause of the contingent universe's existence.

The argument has many forms and has been presented in many different ways. In each form, the argument focuses upon the causes that lead up to the existence of things. The argument appears to answer the questions, how did the universe begin? Why was the universe created? And who created the universe? Philosophers over the centuries have used different terminology to describe the first cause of the universe. Philosophers have been known to refer to this first cause as 'the first cause', 'the first mover', 'necessary being', 'self-existing being', and of course, 'God'. The cosmological argument pre-dates Christianity, and Plato, the student of the 'father of

philosophy' Socrates, developed one of the earliest forms. Plato argued that the power to produce movement logically comes from the power to receive and pass it on. In order for there to be movement in the first place, there must have been an uncaused cause to start the movement. Plato termed this uncaused cause the 'first cause' or 'first mover'.

In the first cause, Aquinas said that in the world there are things that show motion. He said whatever caused this motion must have been moved by something else. Aquinas believed that the chain of movement cannot go back to infinity, and he believed there must have been a prime mover, which itself was unmoved. Aquinas said that the unmoved mover began movement in everything without actually ever being moved itself. For Aquinas, this mover was God. Aquinas was talking about movement in a broad sense. He included not only movement from one place to another, but also movement in the sense of change in quality and quantity. According to Aquinas, an object only moved when an external force was applied to it. Aquinas said that things could reach their potential through an external force was applied to it. Aquinas used the example of fire making wood hot. In order for a thing to change, actuality is required. If it were not, a thing would have to change in itself. This would mean the thing being actual and potential at the same time, and Aquinas thought this to be a contradiction. For example, if wood could make itself hot, then it would be hot already, and wood cannot be hot to begin with, otherwise, it would not change and become hot. The fact that wood is not hot already is its actuality, and the fact that fire can make wood hot is its potentiality. In turn, something must have made the fire change and become set alight, each change is therefore a result of an earlier change. Aquinas did not accept that there was a series of infinite changes. He concluded that there must have been a point of a first mover who made a first movement. According to Aquinas, 'it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, moved by no other; and this everyone understands to be God'.

In the second of his five ways, Aquinas used causes to prove the existence of God. Aquinas observed that nothing could be the cause of itself, as this means it would have to have existed before it existed. This is a logical impossibility. Aquinas rejected an infinite series of causes, and believed that there must have been a first, uncaused cause. This first cause started the chain of causes that have caused all events to happen, and for Aquinas, the first cause was God. In the third of his five ways, Aquinas used contingency. Aquinas identified contingency of matter in the universe, on the basis that things come into existence and then cease to exist. Aquinas concluded there must have been a time when nothing existed. Therefore, the cause of the universe must be external and have always existed. Aquinas argued that there must have been a 'necessary being' that brought everything else into existence, and Aquinas argued that this was God. He concluded that if God did not exist, then nothing would exist.