

## Cosmological Argument

The Cosmological Argument tries to prove the existence of God from the existence of the cosmos.

The argument works by looking at the laws of the cosmos, determining what the laws are and then looking for something more powerful than the laws that put the laws in place.

The argument is a 'a posteriori' argument which means after the facts. The argument is also synthetic because it looks beyond pure definition and relies on evidence to prove its value. The argument is also said to be inductive because it draws on information away from the definition alone.

Plato said that the power to produce movement is logically prior to the power to receive it and pass it on. There must be an uncaused mover/causer to originate the movement. Aristotle said 'ex nihilo nihil fit' which means 'out of nothing, nothing comes'. From these ancient philosophers stemmed the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas in the first of his three ways put forward the logical argument that every motion had to have a mover, every effect a causer and everything that 'might have been' must have something greater that might have been a necessary being. Aquinas thought that every event has a cause or reason for why it exists, without which it would not be or could not be intelligible. If there is no ultimate cause of a thing (that is, if the casual sequence is infinite) then nothing would ever happen or be intelligible here and now. But things do happen here and now. So there must be some ultimate cause which itself is not caused by anything else, and that Aquinas would say is God i.e. A First Cause.

Aquinas recognises the possibility that the cosmological argument could support two different interpretations; God could be understood as the initial cause of all events in the universe, although a problem with this is that it does not guarantee that God still exists, that God is ultimately involved right now with the world or that there is just one first cause. There is also the possibility that the universe might not have always existed in which case the existence of the universe is explained by a sequence of caused events stretching back endlessly. To handle these problems Aquinas proposes that we think of cause in terms of being or existence. For something that is only dependant to exist right now, there must be something that exists right now to account for its existence, which itself is accounted for by something else, and so on. But this sequence cannot go on endlessly because that would mean that ultimately nothing would account for why there is any particular thing right now. That is why there must be a first cause that exists right now and accounts for the existence of all contingent causes.

Analogies such as the 'steam train' analogy has been used to illustrate Aquinas' argument. It is logically accurate to state that a train carriage can not start moving by itself unless it is moved by something else from in front or behind. Aquinas believes the first mover would be God. However the analogy does not prove the existence of a theistic God, it simply adds logic to the argument.

The argument has strengths because it follows logic and the laws of the cosmos. A waverer would be likely to assume that because the pen is writing, there is a force behind it (my hand). Similarly because we are all moving in the

world, there must be an external force outside the cosmos originating the movement.

Whilst Christians would say that this force, the 'first mover' is our theistic God. Critics like Hume, Kant and Russell see flaws in this argument.

Hume criticised the cosmological argument by stating that there is no 'a priori' reason to believe that everything has a cause or a reason by means of which it is explained or understood and no set of observations can establish the truth of the casual principle 'a posteriori'. Besides, why does the existence of anything have to have an ultimate reason in terms of which it is intelligible? Why not accept the possibility of an infinite sequence? If it means that things are ultimately intelligible then so be it. Only human inclination to ground things in ultimate terms requires us to assume an end to the explanation. Finally, even if we were to accept the argument it would prove that God is anything other than a cause of things who might not care at all about his creation. Hume stated that "casual connections present more observed sequences".

Kant stated that "cause and effect are a way in which our minds interpret the world". Kant and Russell suggest that God had no interaction with the world (if there is actually a God). They recognise that even if there was a 'first cause' it needn't be the theistic God. There is also the possibility of there being many causes or no cause at all for the existence of the cosmos. Russell said that the universe was "mere unintelligible brute fact". However there is little to support this statement when considering the laws of the cosmos; that all motion, cause, being and effect have a force behind them.

It would be valid to state that the cosmological argument cannot prove the existence of God because there are recognised flaws/ weaknesses in the argument. However it can be suggested that the argument would be convincing to a waverer because it logically follows the laws of nature and would therefore imply the existence of a 'first cause'. Doyle's argument that "the idea of the world appearing by accident is as likely as a whirlwind passing through a scrap yard and assembling a jumbo jet" would be quite convincing to a waverer who bases their beliefs in the existence of God from the laws of nature.

Scientists have discovered that atoms can often appear and exist by themselves without a cause. This fact has scientific knowledge supporting it, which often undermines waverer's beliefs in God. Another factor is that some find the cosmological argument unsatisfying because the first cause/mover is always referred to as 'other' so it would be wrong to suggest that the argument actually proves the existence of a theistic God, because one cannot actually prove that the causer is our theistic God and not an 'other' or 'others'.

The argument can only be subjective because we have no evidence of laws outside the cosmos. Both the arguments strengths and weaknesses rely on scientific knowledge so a waverer may find it difficult to determine which evidence is more reliable to believe. The weaknesses in the argument are effective to an extent but one has to consider whether one overall cause or many causes effect the ability to convince a non-believer.