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The cosmological argument began with Plato and ever since been defended and attacked by many great philosophers.

One of the supporters was Leibniz.

The cosmological argument is basically an argument about causation. Its major supporter was Thomas Aquinas though Gottfried Leibniz also put forward a simplified version of Aquinas's cosmological argument. The major critics of the argument have included David Hume and Bertrand Russell who question the basic principle that the argument works from.

While the arguments of Aquinas assume that the universe cannot be temporally infinite, there is a version of the cosmological argument (supported by Leibniz (1646-1714) among others) that allows that the universe is temporally infinite.

Leibniz regards the cosmological argument as a strong argument because there has to be an explanation for life.

In 1710 Leibniz furthered Aquinas' third "way" (self existence) into what he called the "Principle of Sufficient Reason". By 'Sufficient Reason' he meant "complete explanation". He thinks it is logical that there is a reason for existence.

Leibniz put forward a very simple and understandable version of the cosmological argument, which states that there must be a reason, why things exist because there must be a reason why anything happens and why one thing happens rather than another. If something exists, it is that something faced with the possibility of making it exist or not making it exist chose to make it exist. Ultimately as things exist, there must be a first-mover that itself was not caused to exist. This first-mover is what we understand by God. As things exist, God must exist.

Some great base must exist, he said, that was in itself the ultimate reason, the ultimate "brute fact". Coppleston, in his famous debate with Bertrand Russell, described Leibniz's logical end as a "necessary being" or a "being, which must and cannot not exist".

However many major thinkers have rejected the cosmological argument such as David Hume.

Hume states that it is illogical to think of God. God is just claimed as an excuse because of the need for a first mover. God is just a name to a process we can't define. Hume is an empiricist (bases everything on experience).

Empiricists believe that if you can't see/ study something in this world, you do not know it.

You cannot observe a universe starting, therefore we do not know about it.

Hume also suggests that we are here, and that is that. Why do we need an explanation anyway?

Hume asks why, if everything has a cause, must one thing not.

As does Bertrand Russell. Russell believes that the universe is 'just a brute fact', and it does not matter how, we are just here!'

The universe is not an issue.

Perhaps the most important fault in the cosmological argument is what would appear to be a contradiction in the idea of everything having a cause for its existence, while at the same time holding that at the end of the chain there is a first-mover that is itself unmoved. Is there any reason to believe this idea? Why should everything except God have a cause? If you say that God does not need a cause for existence, that God

is a necessarily existing thing, then cannot this idea be used in favour of anything that exists not having a cause?

If however you say that everything does have a prior cause, then surely this shouldn't have exceptions. On this basis there will be an infinite regress with no first-mover.

To say that everything that exists must have a prior cause and that God is a first-mover, himself uncaused seems to be a certain contradiction. Why can't there be an infinite regress, which Aquinas claims is impossible?

The cosmological argument does not then seem to be a very promising argument for the existence of God, but at the same time it doesn't automatically follow from this that God doesn't exist, just that the cosmological argument is not a sufficient way of confirming God's existence.

A classic criticism of the cosmological argument for the existence of God that originates from Immanuel Kant states that the cosmological argument assumes the ontological argument. Kant's criticism claims that the cosmological argument's conclusion has 'simply assumed that a concept of higher reality is perfectly adequate to the concept of absolute necessity in existence'.

You have to base things on experience.

Kant believed in God but wanted to prove it beyond doubt, scientifically as well as logically.

Kant did not regard the cosmological argument as sustainable or rational.

B

It is not possible to regard the cosmological argument as a completely secure and complete argument because of the many faults perceptible in it.

The strengths of the Cosmological Argument lie in both its simplicity and easily comprehensible concept that there cannot be an infinite number of causes to an event.

Some arguments for God's existence require more thought and training in terms and concepts, but this argument is basic and simple. Also, it is perfectly logical to assert that objects do not bring themselves into existence and must, therefore, have causes.

Like the teleological argument, the cosmological argument suffers from our uncertainty of whether or not the past, like the future, is infinite. If the past stretches back infinitely, then there never was a Prime Cause. If there have been an infinite number of causes in the past then logically there cannot have been a first cause.

One of the weaknesses of the argument is that if all things need a cause to exist, then God Himself must also, by definition, need a cause to exist. But this only pushes causation back and implies that there must be an infinite number of causes, which cannot be. This is paradoxical.

The cosmological argument does however assist with the question of existence and many philosophers observe the theory as a strong one.

Therefore, the cosmological argument, although able to be understood easily and useful in some cases, is not a sustainable argument and cannot be regarded as a logical explanation for the existence of God.