

The Cosmological Argument

The Cosmological Argument attempts to prove that God exists by showing that there cannot be an infinite number of regressions of causes to things that exist. It states that there must be a final uncaused-cause of all things. This uncaused-cause is asserted to be God.

Arguments like this are thought up to recognize why we and the universe exist.

The Cosmological Argument takes several forms but is basically represented below.

Cosmological Argument

Things exist

It is possible for those things not to exist

Whatever has the possibility of non-existence, yet exists, has been caused to exist.

Something cannot bring itself into existence because it would have had to exist to do that.

There cannot be an infinite number of causes to bring something into existence, because an infinite regression of causes has no original cause, which means there is no cause of existence.

Since the universe exists, it must have a cause, therefore there must be an uncaused cause of all things.

This uncaused cause must be God.

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) had a version of the Cosmological Argument called the Argument from Motion. He stated that things in motion could not have brought themselves into motion but must be caused to move. There cannot be an infinite regression of movers. Therefore, there must be an Unmoved Mover. This Unmoved Mover is God.

Strengths of the argument

The strengths of the Cosmological Argument consist of the simplicity and easily understandable concept that there cannot be an infinite number of causes to an event. Some arguments for God's existence require more thought and education in terms and concepts, but this argument is basic and simple. Also, it is perfectly logical to claim that objects do not bring themselves into existence and must, therefore, have causes.

Weaknesses of the argument

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 contradictory.

Also, by definition, God is uncaused.

There are two forms of the cosmological argument.

One is the Kalam argument:

Like all cosmological arguments, the kalam cosmological argument is an argument from the existence of the world or universe to the existence of God. The existence of the universe, such arguments claim, stands in need of explanation. The only adequate explanation, the arguments suggest, is that God created it.

What distinguishes the kalam cosmological argument from other forms of cosmological argument is that it rests on the idea that the universe has a beginning in time. Modal forms of the cosmological argument are consistent with the universe having an infinite past. With the kalam cosmological argument, however, it is precisely because the universe

is thought to have a beginning in time that the existence of the universe is thought to stand in need of explanation.

The argument has the following structure:

- (1) Everything that has a beginning of its existence has a cause of its existence.
- (2) The universe has a beginning of its existence.

Therefore:

- (3) The universe has a cause of its existence.
- (4) If the universe has a cause of its existence then that cause is God.

Therefore:

- (5) God exists.

The key idea of the kalam cosmological argument is “The universe has a beginning of its existence”. How do we know that the universe has a beginning of its existence? We don’t know if the universe has always been here and has always existed. The supporter of the kalam cosmological argument must show that this cannot be the case if his argument is to be successful.

Believers of the kalam cosmological argument claim that it is impossible that the universe has an infinite past. The existence of an infinite past, they say, requires numerous illogical ideas.

The kalam cosmological argument rests on the controversial claim that the universe has a beginning in time. The argument from contingency, in contrast, is consistent with the universe having existed from eternity.

The Contingency Theory:

The argument from contingency can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Everything that exists contingently has a reason for its existence.
- (2) The universe exists contingently.

Therefore:

- (3) The universe has a reason for its existence.
- (4) If the universe has a reason for its existence then that reason is God.

Therefore:

- (5) God exists.

If something is contingent, it is not necessary.

The argument from contingency draws on the distinction between things that exist necessarily and things that exist contingently.

The modal cosmological argument or “argument from contingency” is the argument from the contingency of the world or universe to the existence of God. The argument from contingency is the most prominent form of cosmological argument historically. The classical statements of the cosmological argument in the works of Plato, of Aquinas and of Leibniz are all statements of the modal form of the argument.

It is this that the argument from contingency takes to be significant. It is because it is thought that the universe exists contingently that its existence is thought to require explanation. If the universe might not have existed, then why does it exist? Supporters of the cosmological argument suggest that questions like this always have answers. The existence of things that are necessary does not require explanation; their non-existence is impossible. The existence of anything contingent, however, does require explanation.

They might not have existed, and so there must be some reason that they do exist.

The only adequate explanation of the existence of the contingent universe, the argument from contingency suggests, is that there exists a necessary being on which its existence it rests. For the existence of the contingent universe must rest on something, and if it rested on some contingent being then that contingent being too would require some explanation of its existence. The ultimate explanation of the existence of all things,

therefore, must be the existence of some necessary being. Followers of the cosmological argument identify God as this necessary being.

Isobel Manley