

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.

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

Cosmological Argument

1. Things exist.
2. It is possible for those things to not exist.
3. Whatever has the possibility of non existence, yet exists, has been caused to exist.
 - A. Something cannot bring itself into existence since it must exist to bring itself into existence which is illogical.
4. There cannot be an infinite number of causes to bring something into existence.
 - . Because an infinite regression of causes ultimately has no initial cause which means there is no cause of existence.
 - A. Since the universe exists, it must have a cause.
5. Therefore, there must be an uncaused cause of all things.
6. The 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 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.

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 paradoxical.

Also, by definition, God is uncaused.

The Cosmological Argument

The basic notion of cosmological arguments is that the world and everything in it is dependent on something other than itself for its existence. In other words, despite the fact that the world seems to be self-perpetuating one needs to consider the source of all that there is.

Although the cosmological argument was famously expressed in three of Thomas Aquinas' Five Ways (rational arguments for the existence of God), there is an early form of it in the writings of Plato (see Plato's Cosmological Argument), and the argument is also largely grounded in the metaphysics of Aristotle. Both Plato and Aristotle argued that the fact of motion (i.e. things move) requires a mover ('... the series must start with something for nothing can come from nothing' (Aristotle)). The key idea is that if something exists there must be preliminary factors that have influenced (and caused) it to exist. An example might be to say that if the computer I am currently using to write these words on exists then there must have been certain individuals who were responsible for its design and construction. It is certainly true that if they had not lived (existed) then this computer would quite possibly not be in front of me today.

Although Aquinas is the most well known exponent of the Cosmological Argument other forms have also been explored. For instance, Leibniz attempted to explain why there was something rather than nothing in the universe (see Leibniz 'On the Ultimate Origination of Things'). In the modern era, those who have wanted to question the notion of causation and medieval physics have argued that the fact the universe has existence means it must have had a beginning. This latter view can be found in the Kalam Cosmological Argument.

In its most widely accepted forms the cosmological argument asks questions about the origin of the world around us. If we accept the idea that everything depends on something else for its existence then by continually regressing back we will surely arrive at the first cause behind all things which exist today. This fact is assumed by both Christians and scientists who argue that the world and everything in it exists because of a 'first cause'. Scientists would argue that the first cause was the Big Bang (Evolution). Christians (and other theistic religions) believe God (or the Divine) was the first cause of all there is (Creation).

The cosmological argument not only seeks to reason the existence of God but could also be said to provide a meaning to life in the world. For instance, if we know where we have come from then surely, it could be argued, we have some idea of where we are going? Theists could obviously claim that if life begins with God then life has a purpose with God. However, atheists could argue that if life began from a series of natural causes then the purpose to life must be found in biology. This is the teaching of atheist evolutionists such as Richard Dawkins who believe that our purpose in life is simply to propagate our genes and successfully pass them onto the next generation.

Clearly there will be those who claim the world is just a 'brute fact'. The world simply exists and possibly has always existed (infinite). Against this theists usually argue that it is contrary to our human instincts to simply accept that the world 'just is'. They would claim that humans need to have an ultimate meaning in their life and need to find answers to such questions as, "Where did I come from?" and, "Why am I here?". But for a theist to answer these questions they need to assume that the world (and the universe) is the work of God. This is an assumption which not everyone is going to happily adopt. Furthermore, do we need to understand God as the first cause of all there is in order to give the world meaning? Cannot the world and all that is in it have meaning without reference to God? (The Buddhist religion is an example of people living a life full of meaning and purpose despite not believing in any God/gods. NB. Humanist Associations!).

The idea of beginnings is based on a linear view of time. By this we mean that time progresses from a past to a future in each moment. What has been will never be again. But in today's multi-faith society we have been exposed to the worldview of other religions and the idea that time could be cyclical (E.g. Hinduism, Buddhism).

Cyclical view of the world

This cyclical view also questions the whole notion of 'beginnings' (where does a circle begin?) and this is another aspect of the Cosmological Argument; the possibility that the universe could be infinite and has no beginning (non-temporal). If this is accepted then it questions the issue of a temporal beginning to the present universe. However, theists who accept a non-temporal theory still believe that the universe needs to be sustained by something and as far as they are concerned it is sustained by God and would not be here if God did not exist. This point was actually argued by Aquinas' in his 'First Way'.

One of the main issues with regard to the cosmological argument for the existence of God is what the role of God is after the world has been created? Certainly it can be argued that God *could* be the first cause (either as creation out-of-nothing ('*ex nihilo*' Genesis 1-2) or a form of theistic evolution (God as the cause of the evolutionary process - the power behind the Big Bang?)). However, the law of the conservation of energy (that the amount of energy in the universe must remain constant in order for there to be 'laws of nature') means that God could not be continually putting energy into the world. This questions God's activity in the universe and thus the question of miracles. Thus God as the first cause may only be the first cause. God may not be the causing or causes! This then leads us to the notion of deism in that after setting it in motion God has withdrawn from the world and merely observe it from a distance (like a watchmaker winding up a watch and watching it work, run down and stop). But if this is so what reason is there for believing in God and practicing religion today? Furthermore, why believe that a God who may have set the world in motion is still around? It may have been that in the act of being the first cause of all there is God 'burnt out' and died. God might even have gone off to do a better job of creating universes elsewhere! Even if God is still around the Cosmological

Argument has not solved the further issue of which God actually created the world. This latter point may only be solved on the basis of special revelation (which is outside the boundary of the Cosmological Argument as presented here).