

Philosophy Of Religion
The Cosmological Argument

- A) *Outline the key ideas of the Cosmological Argument for the existence of God and identify at least TWO of its strengths (14)*

“Cosmological” is the name given to a group of arguments for the existence of God, or some underlying cause of the universe, which are based on the simple fact that there is an universe! The Cosmological Argument seeks to prove the existence of God by looking at the universe. It is an a posteriori proof based on experience and the observation of the world not logic so the outcome is probable or possible not definite. The argument is in three forms; motion, causation and being. The basic concept of cosmological arguments is that the world and everything in it is dependent on something other than itself for its existence.

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, and has been caused to exist. *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 - 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.

Although the cosmological argument was famously expressed in three of Thomas Aquinas' Five Ways (rational arguments for the existence of God but his theology rests on scientific assumptions which are no longer valid today), There is an early form of the cosmological argument in the writings of Plato, and the argument is also largely grounded in the thoughts of Aristotle.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 starting factors that have influenced/caused it to exist. An example of this might be to say that if the computer I am using to write these words on; exists then there must have been individuals who were responsible for the computers design. 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 follower 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. (Leibniz's theory is also known as 'The Principle of Sufficient Reason') 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

The widely accepted form the cosmological argument asks questions about the origin of the world. If we accept the idea that everything depends on something else for its existence; then by continually regress back we will surely arrive at the first cause

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behind all things, which exist today - What if the history of the world, each successive event formed a circle or a figure of eight?

Time was looped and infinity an actuality. There could be no beginning and no end!

Both Christians and scientists argue that the world and everything in it exists because of a '*first cause*' assume this fact. Scientists would argue that the first cause was the Big Bang (Evolution). Christians believe God 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 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 spread 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 say 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 universe is the work of God. This is an assumption, which not everyone is going to happy to adopt.

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. It is an inductive argument that starts from an inductive first premise – **The Universe exists!**

Another strength of the cosmological argument is the expansion of the universe – the big band theory- Kalam argument!

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 crucial premise of the Kalam cosmological argument, then, is the second: "The universe has a beginning of its existence".

How do we know that the universe has a beginning of its existence?

Might not the universe stretch back in time into infinity, always having existed?

Supporters of the Kalam cosmological argument claim that it is impossible that the universe has an infinite past. In support of this claim, modern advocates of the argument often appeal to modern science, specifically to the Big Bang theory. Even quantum physics support this argument. A vacuum is thought as a "nothing" and is thought to be made up of "nothing" But however, to modern quantum physicists, however, the vacuum has turned out to be rich with complex and unexpected behaviour. They imagine it as a state of minimum energy where quantum movement,

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contains electromagnetic energy and is a source of “random” particles appearing. So in theory the appearance of the universe could have been an apparently random advent!

B) Why do some, philosophers reject this argument? (6)

Some, philosophers reject the cosmological argument because they see flaws in the argument and with the success of the scientific theories in describing events, most people have now come to believe that God allows the universe to evolve according to his pre-set laws and doesn't intervene.

There are many problems with Aquinas version of the cosmological argument, which philosophers have come up with and these are:

- Aquinas' theology rests on scientific assumptions, which are no longer valid today (E.g. A chain of command of causes).
- The universe might be infinite. Although there was no-thing there was definitely 'something' at the time of the singularity that led to the Big Bang.
- Why assume the Christian God is behind the cause of the universe? There might be many gods (NB. Plato and the Cosmological Argument).
- How can God be an Uncaused Causer (or Unmoved Mover)?
'If God made everything, who made God?'

There are also problems with the Kalam Cosmological Argument, there are as follows:

- A possible disagreement to the Kalam Cosmological Argument might be the **Oscillating Universe Theory**.
- Transcendence does not necessarily mean supernatural (i.e. God – and which God, if any).
- If the argument is correct then God must have made a decision to create this world. Either in or out of time an action has come after a decision. If this is the case then God is subject to 'time'.
On the basis of the Kalam Cosmological Argument God would have had to begin to exist as well.
- The argument states that actual infinite things cannot exist.
Therefore God, as an actual infinite Being, cannot exist either.

A more powerful case against the cosmological argument depends on the difficulty of seeing God as "a necessary being", the cause of Himself.

We don't know that necessary existence is a meaningful concept. Even if it is, why shouldn't the Universe or the Big Bang, the most basic, earliest thing we actually know about, itself be considered the first, necessary cause? Bertrand Russell defended the idea of the universe as a "brute fact." Surely this makes more sense. In this worldview, the universe, not God, would be put forward as self-causing.

Claiming that God is instead of just a brute fact shifts the problem to why He has no cause, rather than the universe - which we at least know exists - has no cause.

But probably the most important objection that can be made to the cosmological argument is that even if it succeeds completely and shows the existence of some first cause of the universe, outside the universe, it does not in any way show the existence of God. It is surprising the number of people who use it as their proof for God without acknowledging that the first cause could be anything. Some philosophers however would say the most critical flaw in the cosmological argument, lies in its faulty

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understanding of time and causality. Modern cosmological theory states that the beginning of the Universe is, by definition, also the beginning of time.