

The Cosmological Argument

Cosmological Argument

Cosmological arguments attempt to prove that the universe requires a **cause** (and that this cause is what we call 'God').

All cosmological arguments require three things:

- (1) **PSR**: A principle that every being or event requires some cause to bring it about. (PSR = Principle of Sufficient Reason)
- (2) A **contingent being** (or event or series).
- (3) **AIR**: A principle that infinite causal chains are illicit. (AIR = Anti-Infinite Regress Principle)

[Something is **contingent** if it requires something else in order to exist or occur. If it is not contingent, then it is **necessary**.]

Cosmological Argument

Cosmological arguments attempt to prove that the universe requires a **cause** because of some **contingency** (and that this cause is what we call 'God').

There are two kinds of cause, and therefore two kinds of this argument:

- (1) **Sustaining cause**: the Atemporal Cosmological Argument. (Even if the universe is eternal, and so was never caused in time, it still needs a cause to keep it in existence). [Aquinas]
- (2) **Initiating cause**: the Temporal Cosmological Argument. (The universe cannot be eternal, and therefore requires a cause to bring it about at some time in the past). [Bonaventure, al-Ghazali]

Causal Series

Accidental Causal Series: involve temporally sequential causes (e.g., dominoes in a row, parents begetting offspring).

Essential Causal Series involve temporally simultaneous causes (e.g., a book supported by a lectern, which in turn is supported by a desk, and so on).

According to Aquinas: both series can **progress** infinitely, but only accidental series can **regress** infinitely. Therefore, the “Anti-Infinite Regress” principle applies only to contingent objects/events that are part of an essential causal series.

Cosmological Argument

- (1) If something is contingent, then there is something else which causes it to exist. [by definition of 'contingent']
- (2) X is a contingent being.
- (3) \therefore There is something other than X that causes it to exist. [1, 2]
- (4) This something is either necessary or contingent. [excluded middle]
- (5) If it is necessary, then God exists (because it would be God). [by definition of 'God']
- (6) If it is contingent, then it will have a cause other than itself. [definition of 'contingent']
- (7) An infinite regress of causes is not possible [AIR]
- (8) \therefore If the cause of X is a contingent being, then God exists. [6, 7]
- (9) \therefore God exists [4, 5, 8]

AIR = Anti-Infinite Regress principle

Law of Excluded Middle = for all x, x is either A or not-A.

X = **an individual contingent thing or event (or) the composition of the world (or) the entirety of the material of the world itself.**

Aquinas's Argument

- (1) Whatever moves is moved by another. [argued for at §§5-10]
- (2) Some things are in motion. [evident by the senses]
- (3) ∴ There must be other things moving them.
- (4) We cannot regress infinitely through movers. [argued for at §§11-15]
- (5) ∴ There is an unmoved mover.

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. 1, ch. 13]

Aquinas's Argument

- (1) **Whatever moves is moved by another.** [argued for at §§5-10]
- (2) Some things are in motion. [evident by the senses]
- (3) ∴ There must be other things moving them.
- (4) We cannot regress infinitely through movers. [argued for at §§11-15]
- (5) ∴ There is an unmoved mover.

1st Argument for Premise #1 (§§5-7)

- (1) If X moves itself, then it has within itself its own principle of motion. [this in itself implies divisibility]
- (2) Whatever is moved is divisible (i.e., composed of parts).
- (3) A whole composed of parts is dependent upon its parts.
- (4) ∴ Whatever is moved depends on its parts.
- (5) A self-mover will be moved by one of its parts (the inner principle of motion)
- (6) But if a part of a whole is at rest, then the entire whole must be at rest.
- (7) ∴ The whole cannot be self-moved (by some inner principle).

Aquinas's Argument

- (1) **Whatever moves is moved by another.** [argued for at §§5-10]
(2) Some things are in motion. [evident by the senses]
(3) ∴ There must be other things moving them.
(4) We cannot regress infinitely through movers. [argued for at §§11-15]
(5) ∴ There is an unmoved mover.

2nd Argument for Premise #1 (§8)

This is from **induction**: all known motions are caused by another.

3rd Argument for Premise #1 (§§9-10)

This is from **act and potency**: The same thing cannot be both in act and in potency (with respect to the same thing). For instance, a cold stone cannot warm itself; rather, it requires something already warm to bring it from “potentially warm” to “actually warm.” Therefore, whatever is potentially moving cannot bring itself to be actually moving by itself; therefore, whatever moves is moved by another.

Aquinas's Argument

- (1) Whatever moves is moved by another. [argued for at §§5-10]
- (2) Some things are in motion. [evident by the senses]
- (3) ∴ There must be other things moving them.
- (4) **We cannot regress infinitely through movers.** [argued for at §§11-15]
- (5) ∴ There is an unmoved mover.

Three proofs of premise 4 (the “anti-infinite regress principle”)

- (1) (§§12-13): An infinite regress of motions cannot occur in a finite time. Only a finite time has passed; therefore, only a finite number of motions have occurred.
- (2) (§§14): Without a first mover, there is no motion (this assumes an essential series of causation, of course).
- (3) (§15): (Same as with 2, only reversed.)

Modality

- Necessary,
- Actual, or
- Possible.
- Non-necessary
- Non-actual
(= possible,
but not actual)
- Contingent (= actual, but not necessary)
- Impossible

