

# The Cosmological Argument

# The Cosmological Argument - a rough sketch

Why are things as they are? / Why is there something rather than nothing?

The universe is the totality of contingent things.

The best explanation for the existence of contingent things is a necessary thing / a primary mover.

# The Argument from Motion

1. It is evident to our senses that things are moving.
2. Whatever is moved by something else.
3. Everything that is in motion must have been set in motion by something which itself is moving.
4. There must be a primary mover otherwise there would be no motion (there is no potential without the actual)



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

# The Argument from Causation

1. It is evident that some things are caused
2. Things which are caused must be caused by something else as things cannot cause themselves
3. There cannot be a infinite regress
4. Therefore, there must have been a first cause which cannot itself have been caused (an uncaused cause)



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

# Infinite Regress

- A sequence of justifications that never come to an end.
- Therefore, there is no justification.

# Principle of Sufficient Reason

- Everything that exists must have a reason or cause

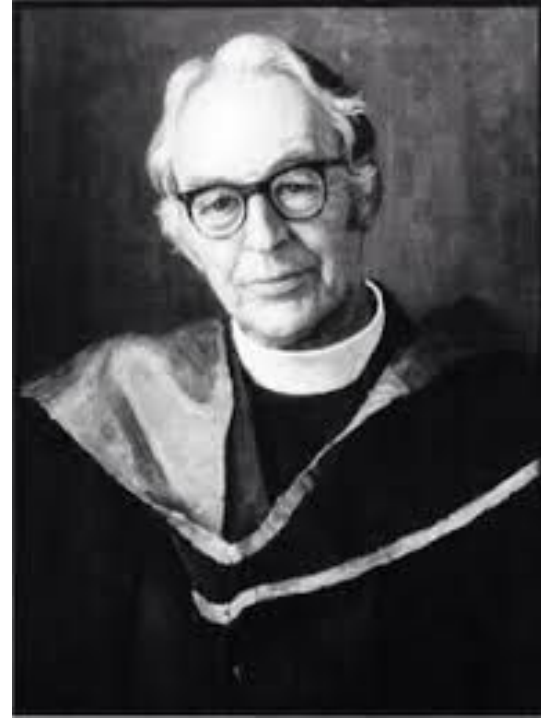
# The Argument from Contingency

1. There are contingent beings
2. Contingent beings require a cause
3. The cause of the contingent being is something other than the contingent being
4. The cause of contingent beings must be other contingent beings or a necessary being
5. The existence of contingent beings alone does not provide a complete explanation for the existence of contingent beings
6. Therefore, there must be a necessary being
7. The universe is a totality of contingent things
8. Therefore, the necessary being must be external to the universe

**A Contingent Truth:** Something which happens to be true but could have been false.

**A Necessary Truth:** Something which has to be true and can't be false.

# Bertrand Russell and F.C. Copleston Debate, 1948



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXPdpEJk78E>

# Analytic Propositions

Example:

‘All triangles have 3 sides’

- It is self-contradictory to deny the statement
- It is necessarily true
- An *a priori* truth

# Objections

- Hume & Russell - We cannot derive how the universe came about from our experience of the world.
- The Fallacy of Composition - The constitutive parts may not have the same properties as the whole
  - Sometimes the property of the parts is the same as the property of the whole
- The universe doesn't require an explanation

# The *Kalām* Cosmological Argument

- Based on the ideas of Al-Ghazali (1058-1111)
- Contemporary defender: William Lane Craig (1949 - )

# The *Kalām* Cosmological Argument

1. Everything that begins to exist must have a cause for its existence
2. The universe began to exist
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence
4. Science cannot provide us with a causal account of the beginning of the the universe, therefore it must have a personal cause



William Lane Craig

# Did the Universe have a beginning?

- 2nd Law of Thermodynamics
- The expanding universe from a finite point

# The Fallacy of Equivocation

Examples:

Cigarettes are cool

You can't burn yourself on something which is cool

Therefore, you can't burn yourself on a cigarette

# The Fallacy of Equivocation

The universe - the totality of all that there is

The universe - the collection of planets

# Object from Quantum Physics

- The first premise, 'everything that begins to exist must have a cause for its existence' can be challenged

Craig - There are still prior necessary conditions

- Is this enough to constitute a cause

# The Impossibility of Infinity

## Hilbert's Hotel

- An infinite number of rooms which are full
- A new guest arrives, so the hotel managers shifts all the rooms along

An infinite number of things is impossible