

Philosophy of Religion:

Second Exam Question: Present either a cosmological, teleological, axiological or ontological argument and defend it against objections:

### The Cosmological Argument

Part I: From Quinn, pgs. 331-336 by William L. Rowe:

- I. Definition: An argument from the existence of the world to the existence of God.
- II. Usually proceeds in two steps:
  - A. Existence of the world to the existence of a first cause or necessary being.
  - B. Such a being would have the properties associated with the idea of God.
- III. Have appeared from Plato and Aristotle to 18<sup>th</sup> century with Leibniz and Clarke. And have been severely criticized by Hume, Kant and others. However in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been a strong revival of the argument.
- IV. There are two broad types:
  - A. Denying an infinite regress of causes.
    1. Aquinas' "Three Ways" (philosophy can't show a temporal beginning of the world, so rejects a *non-temporal* causal series)
    2. Islamic (rejects a *temporal* infinite regress and believes we can show a temporal beginning)
  - B. Those who allowed for an infinite regress of causes.
    1. Leibniz and Clarke: We just need a sufficient reason for the existence of such a series of causes.
    2. This appeals to *the principle of sufficient reason, PSR*.
    3. An infinite regress series cannot be self-explanatory.
    4. You need a causal activity outside the series.
- V. Type A Details:
  - A. Example:
    - (1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
    - (2) The world began to exist.
    - (3) Therefore, the world has a cause of its existence.
  - B. Premise 2 says that an infinite regress of causes is impossible. But critics say, "Why is it impossible?"
  - C. Here, we ought make a distinction between...
    1. **potentially infinite**
    2. **actually infinite**
  - D. "It must be admitted that it is difficult to imagine an absolutely infinite number of temporally discrete events *having already occurred.*" [my emphasis]

- E. Still, objectors ask, “What is the philosophical objection to it?” The objector will claim for example that you may still add to infinity.
- F. A proponents have also appealed to science (e.g. Big Bang Theory).
- G. Good example of rejecting the *non-temporal* infinite regress of causes is Aquinas’s second way:

- (1) **Some things exist and their existence is caused.**
- (2) **Whatever is caused to exist is caused to exist by something else.**
- (3) **An infinite regress of (non-temporal) causes resulting in the existence of anything is impossible.**
- (4) **Therefore, there is a first cause of existence.**

H. Here, the third premise is attacked:

- 1. What is a non-temporal causal series?
  - a. Aquinas thought it obvious that a non-temporal causal series must terminate in a first, uncaused, member...but why is this supposed to be obvious?
  - b. Such infinite causing may simply be inexplicable.
- 2. Why can’t such a series proceed to infinity?

VI. Type B Details:

- A. Again we don’t need to reject an infinite regress of causes.
- B. Instead, we need a strong explanatory principle according to which there must be a determining reason for the existence of any being whatever.
- C. Here it helps to see this distinction:
  - 1. **dependent being**
  - 2. **self-existent being** (determining reason lies within itself)
- D. Here is Clarke’s cosmological argument:
  - (1) **Every being (that exists or ever did exist) is either a dependent being or a self-existent being.**
  - (2) **Not every being can be a dependent being.**
  - (3) **Therefore, there exists a self-existent being.**
- E. Here, premise 2 is questioned: If there IS an infinite regress of causes, *why can’t every being be a dependent being???*
- F. Some proponents might want to treat the whole series as a dependent being.
- G. But the objection is made that there is no reason to treat the whole series as an independent being.
- H. So, again, premise 2 does not defeat the supposition that every being that exists or ever did exist is a dependent being.

I. ***To meet this objection, the cosmological argument of Clarke and Leibniz required a stronger principle, the principle of sufficient reason (PSR)!!!***

1. PSR is a principle concerning facts, including facts consisting in the existence of individual beings.
2. PSR also requires an explanation for facts about individual being, for example, the fact that John is happy.
3. PSR also requires explanation for general facts such as the fact that someone is happy or the fact that there are dependent beings.

Leibniz: “...***that no fact can be real or existent, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it is so and not otherwise...***”

- J. If this is true, then premise 2 above ***does seem to be true!***
- K. “The question why there are any dependent beings cannot be answered by noting that there always have been dependent beings any more than the question why there are any elephants can be answered simply by observing that there always have been elephants.”
- L. Still, objectors will not say that Clarke’s argument is sound! Is PSR true???
1. One fact *entails* the fact it explains. PSR can’t avoid Spinozism. Each reason would then determine a choice only by virtue of a prior choice to act in accordance with that reason. Infinite regress of all facts running together (my words).
  2. It appears impossible for every contingent fact to have an explanation. A “huge conjunctive fact” appears to be its own explanation and thus disproves PSR! (hmm)
- M. “This does not mean that this argument (Clarke’s) is unsound. It only means that it has not been shown to be sound and, therefore, fails as a proof of the existence of a self-existing being.”

Part II: From Pojman, pgs. 2-47 by Aquinas, Clarke, Edwards, Rowe, Craig and Draper:

Introduction: “All versions of the cosmological argument begin with the a posteriori assumptions that the universe exists and that something outside the universe is required to explain its existence. That is, it is ***contingent***, depending on something outside of itself for its existence.”

- A. Aquinas presents the cosmological argument in terms of “first-cause argument.” The difficulty is seen in the claim that there cannot be an infinite regress of causes.
- B. Clarke sets forth the argument from contingency. This is similar to Aquinas’s third way. Contingent beings are distinguished from a necessary being.

- C. Edwards says there are two problems: 1) The first version commits the fallacy of composition (treating the whole as a dependent being) and 2) the second version fails to recognize that the universe may be a brute fact.
- D. Rowe scrutinizes PSR (see above).
- E. Craig presents the Kalam cosmological argument and goes on to show how science backs it up.
- F. Draper claims that Craig rests on an equivocation of the idea of “beginning to exist.”

I. Aquinas:

- A. First Way: Whatever is moved is moved by another, but this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are moved by the first mover...” Here is the outline for the First Way (from class handout):
  - 1. Some things in the world are in a process of change.
  - 2. Anything in a process of change is being changed by something else because:
    - a. things in a process of change do not yet actually possess the characteristic into which they are changed, though they have the potentiality to possess it, while things that are causing change have that characteristic already,
      - i. because causing change is actualizing some potential, and this can be done only by something already actual.
    - b. Something cannot be potential and actual with respect to the same quality at the same time.
    - c. Therefore, anything in a process of change cannot change itself; it must be changed by something else.
  - 3. But this something else, if it is in a process of change, is also being changed by something else, and so on.

4. This series of things being changed by something else cannot be endless because:
  - a. then there would be no first cause of change and hence no subsequent causes of change,
    - i. because the subsequent causes are only operative if there is a first cause.
5. Therefore, there must be a first cause of change which is itself unchanging; this we understand to be God.

B. Second Way: Is from the nature of efficient cause and nothing can be the efficient cause of itself. This can't go on into infinity because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or one only. Here is the outline of the Second Way (class handout):

1. We observe in the world efficient causes ordered in a series.
2. Something cannot be self-caused because:
  - a. then it would have to precede itself, which is impossible.
3. Such a series cannot be endless because:
  - a. in it an earlier cause produces an intermediate one which produces a last one;
  - b. and if one eliminates the first cause, there will be no intermediate or last one either,
    - i. for if one eliminates a cause, he eliminates its effects.
  - c. Thus, in an endless series of causes, one would have no first cause, no intermediate cause, and no last cause, which is absurd.
4. Therefore, there must be a first cause, which everyone calls "God".

C. Third Way: Is taken from possibility and necessity. Not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. Here is the Third Way (from class outline):

1. We see in the world things that exist but do not have to exist, that is to say, their existence is not necessary but merely possible.
  - a. For we see them coming into being and going out of being.
2. All things cannot be merely possible things because:
  - a. If a thing is merely possible, then at some time it did not exist.
  - b. And if all things were merely possible, then at some time all things did not exist: there was nothing.
  - c. But if at one time nothing existed, then nothing would exist now.
    - i. because something that does not exist cannot bring itself into existence.
  - d. But this contradicts observation.
  - e. Therefore, all things cannot be merely possible things; there must be something that is necessary.
3. A necessary thing may owe the necessity of its existence either to another thing or to itself.
4. The series of necessary things which owe the necessity of their existence to another thing cannot be endless because:
  - a. (See the reasoning in the second way concerning things caused by another.)
5. Therefore, there must be an absolutely necessary thing which is necessary of itself and causes the necessity of existence in other necessary things.

D. Fourth Way: Taken from the gradation to be found in things. Here is the Fourth Way (from class handout):

1. Some things are found to be more good, true, noble than other things.
2. Such comparative terms imply an approximation to a superlative.
3. Something is therefore the truest and best and noblest of things.
4. This is most fully in being.
  - a. Truest things are most fully in being. (Aristotle)
5. This is the cause of the quality in all other things possessing it.

- a. What most fully possesses a property causes it in others. (Aristotle)
  6. There is therefore a being which causes in all other things being and perfection, and this we call God.
- E. Fifth Way: Taken from the governance of the world...some intelligent being exists. Here is the Fifth Way (from class handout):
1. We observe in nature that things without consciousness are ordered to an end.
    - a. For they do not vary in their behavior.
    - b. And they always turn out well.
  2. Nothing without consciousness tends towards a goal unless under the direction of an intelligent mind.
  3. Therefore, everything in nature is directed by someone with intelligence, whom we call God.
- F. Aquinas Reply to Objection 1: “As Augustine says: ‘Since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil.’ This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good.”
- G. Aquinas Reply to Objection 2: “Since nature works for a determinate end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever is done by nature must be traced back to God as to its first cause. So likewise whatever is done voluntarily must be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason and will, since these can change and fail; for all things that are changeable and capable of defect must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle, as has been shown.”
- II. Clarke: “...if we consider such an infinite progression, as *one entire series of dependent* beings; ‘tis plain this whole series of beings can have no cause *from without*, of its existence; because in it are supposed to be included *all things* that are or ever were in the universe: and ‘tis plain it can have no reason *within itself*, of its existence; because no one being in this infinite succession is supposed to be self-existent or *necessary*