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The Cosmological Argument is one of the most commonly presented arguments for the existence of God. It is in fact a group of arguments, or a type of argument. Historically, it was presented by Aristotle. It was later developed by Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, whose arguments were studied and presented later by Thomas Aquinas as The Five Ways¹. This argument has been discussed by many philosophers and theologians throughout history, and continues to be debated in the modern world where advances in the natural sciences have led to further examination of this argument.

This essay will discuss the validity and relevance of the Cosmological Argument in today's world. This will include an explanation of the different types of this argument, a study of the objections to it, and an analysis of these objections. Through analysing and replying to the objections, the aim is to show that this argument remains relevant today despite the advances in natural science, and that it has value in both a theoretical and practical sense.

Before entering this discussion, it is important to understand the different versions of the Cosmological Argument, three of which we outline here:

The Argument based on movement: everything in the universe is moving from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality. The moving thing cannot be in a state of potentiality and actuality at the same time, and so it cannot be a mover and moved at the same time. Thus, that which is moving must be moved by something other than itself. This process would go on *ad infinitum* unless there is a First Mover or an Unmoved Mover, whom we call God. This argument is adopted from Ibn Sina and presented by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*, where he states:

“Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be

itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover”[2](#)

The argument from First Cause (temporal version): the universe had a beginning. Anything that has a beginning needs a Creator. The universe could not have created itself, and there cannot be an infinite chain of causes for the universe. Therefore, the universe must have had a Creator, external to itself, whom we call God[3](#).

This argument has a temporal component. It assumes that the universe was at one time not existing and then began to exist. It was also presented by Thomas Aquinas[4](#).

It has been further developed by Muslim *Mutakallimun* (theologians) as the argument of *Huduth* (coming about) of the universe. The Muslim *Mutakallimun* refer to the following references to this argument from the Holy Qur'an:

“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything.” (The Holy Qur'an, 6: 101).

“It is Allah Who has created seven heavens and of the earth the like thereof...” (The Holy Qur'an, 65: 12).

The argument from Contingency: this argument allows for the possibility that the universe is eternal and had no beginning. It is based on the observation that the parts of this universe are contingent, meaning they could have not existed or they may cease to exist. This is extended to argue that the universe in its totality is contingent. Since it is possible for the universe not to exist, it requires a cause which would have brought it into existence. This cause cannot be contingent for otherwise it too would need a cause to bring it into existence and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus, contingent things are insufficient to account for the existence of contingent beings. This means there must be a Necessary Being whose non-existence is an impossibility.

This argument is also adopted from Ibn Sina by Thomas Aquinas[5](#). It is also presented by Muslim philosophers and *Mutakallimun*. In particular, Sheikh al-Tousi says in his monumental work *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*:

“The Existent, if He is Necessary, then this is what we want to prove. If He is not Necessary, this would lead to impossibility, circularity or infinite regress...”[6](#)

The *Mutakallimun* refer to the following references to this proof in the Holy Qur'an:

“O mankind! It is you who stand in need of Allah, but Allah is Ghani (Needless), Worthy of all praise.” (The Holy Qur'an, 35: 15)

“...But Allah is Needless, and you (mankind) are the needy...” (The Holy Qur’an, 47:38)

“Were they created by nothing, or were they themselves the creators? (52:35)

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, but they have no firm Belief.” (52:36)

More recently, this argument has also been developed by Leibniz, who presents it as the principle of sufficient reason (PSR). He argues quite simply that there can be no existent fact “without there being a sufficient reason for it being so and not otherwise”. Applying this to the Cosmological Argument he states: "Why is there something rather than nothing? The sufficient reason [...] is found in a substance which [...] is a necessary being bearing the reason for its existence within itself.⁷

Discussions Regarding Contingency

Is the universe contingent?

One objection brought forward by Bertrand Russell is this: the parts of the universe being contingent does not mean that the whole universe is contingent. His argument is based on the Fallacy of Composition, whereby we mistakenly conclude that since the parts of a whole have a certain property, the whole must have the property too⁸. For example, if each drop in the ocean is small, then it would be fallacious to conclude that the whole ocean is small.

In answer to this we argue that sometimes the whole does have the same property as the parts depending on the nature of the property in question⁹. The ocean, for example, is fluid, because the drops that form to make it are fluid. The contingency of the universe is more like this second example, because if all the contingent things in this universe ceased to exist, then the universe would cease to exist. If it is possible for the universe to cease to exist, then it is contingent.

In addition to this, if something is contingent, it contains a contingent part. The whole and the part overlap, and so have a common part. Since the part in which they overlap is wholly contingent, then the whole must also be contingent¹⁰.

Discussions Regarding the Causal Principle

Does a Contingent being require a Cause?

An essential part of the argument from contingency is the principle that effects need causes. This has been termed the Causal Principle or the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR). Without this principle, the universe would not be intelligible.

Mackie has questioned this principle by arguing that just because the Causal Principle makes the universe easier for us to understand, this does not mean that this is how the universe works. He states

that we should simply “work with brute facts^{[11](#)}”.

In answer to this: working with brute facts would undermine scientific endeavour altogether. In fact, it would make any investigation into the laws of the universe futile. The best explanation then is that the Causal Principle really is how the universe operates.

Another objection comes from Bertrand Russell, who argues that the universe does not need an explanation– that the universe, “just there, and that's all”^{[12](#)}. The basis for this argument lies in Russell's empiricist philosophy. He argues that we cannot ask about or make a conclusion about something which we cannot experience, and since we cannot experience what is beyond the universe, we cannot ask about its cause.

In answer to this one can argue that we do not need to experience every possible member of the class of contingent things to make a conclusion that a contingent thing requires a cause. If we experience that some contingent things need a cause, then we can conclude that all contingent things, including the universe, need a cause. For example, to know that a ball dropped from the roof of the town hall on a Sunday by a schoolboy will fall to the ground, we do not need a sample that includes schoolboys dropping a ball on a Sunday at that location.

Objections to the Causal Principle from Quantum Physics

Challenges to the Causal Principle have in more recent times come from the field of quantum physics. While these objections are primarily aimed at the argument based on creation, which has a temporal component, they still apply to the argument from contingency because they question the Causal Principle itself.

One argument is that on the quantum level, the connection between cause and effect is loosened. The example given is that of electrons that can pass out of existence at one point and come back into existence elsewhere. Their intermediate existence cannot be determined, nor can any cause for the electrons coming into existence at one point as opposed to another. The claim then is that the Causal Principle is limited in its application.

In response to this objection:

- Some necessary conditions are still required for a quantum event, even if the causal conditions are not sufficient to determine the event. When we compare this to the question of the creation of the universe, we see that there were no prior necessary conditions: simply nothing existed. Therefore, the comparison between quantum events and the creation of the universe is not correct. This reply is presented by Craig^{[13](#)}.

- Quantum phenomena are still compatible with the causal principle because the causes still bring about an effect, it is that the relationship is not determined. This argument is put forward by Pruss¹⁴.
- There is a difference between predictability and causality. It is true that we cannot precisely predict individual subatomic events. However, is this inability due to the absence of causal conditions, or a result of the presence of the observer effecting the relationship? Any attempt to precisely measure these events alters their status, and so we have no way of knowing what is happening without introducing observers into the situation¹⁵.

Here it is also noteworthy to discuss another objection against the Cosmological argument from the field of physics which is also aimed primarily at the argument from creation, but also ends up entering the discussion of causality and atemporal contingency.

This objection revolves around the question of whether the universe began to exist, or whether it has always existed. Proponents of the Big Bang theory argue that actual infinities can exist, that the universe has always existed, and thus does not need a cause. One can answer this objection by arguing that if we go back far enough the universe reaches the point of singularity which constituted its beginning, and the beginning of time, energy, space and matter. Since this event initiates the very laws of physics, one cannot expect physics to explain how it came about.

In answer to this, proponents of the Big Bang theory argue that the Big Bang was a 'non-event'. They argue that an event must result from other events, and thus the Big Bang is a 'non-event', that " $t=0$ is not a bona fide time of its occurrence" and that the singularity cannot be the effect of any cause. In response to this, one can say that an 'event' does not necessarily have to happen in a space-time context. One can consider the Big Bang as the "event of the commencing of the universe". One can then ask why this initial state of the universe was in the past. In other words, causation here is not temporal (not based on something 'not being' then coming into 'being') but rather 'conditional' (why something is the way it is)¹⁶. This atemporal causation would still mean the Big Bang and the commencement of the universe needed a cause, and since God can be conceived atemporally, this atemporal causation makes sense. Furthermore, if the Big Bang is not an event, then all other events arising from it would have to also be 'non-events', and this is an absurdity.

Discussions regarding the Necessary Being

Having dealt with the objections about contingency and the Causal Principle, we move on to discuss the type of cause that the Cosmological Argument from Contingency proposes. The existence of a Necessary Being, who is non-contingent, lies at the heart of the cosmological argument.

Is an Infinite Set of Contingent Causes Possible?

One possible alternative for a Necessary Being that can be imagined is that there is an infinite series of causes, all of which are part of the universe, and are thus contingent. This would negate the need for a Necessary Being beyond the contingent universe.

Such a set of causes remains contingent, and still requires a cause to bring it out of possibility and into existence. In other words, these causes are all still effects, requiring a cause to bring them about. An infinite regress of causes is like having an infinite number of zeroes, no matter how many zeroes there are, they have no value unless a real number is added to them^{[17](#)}.

A similar argument to this is presented by David Hume, who argues that when the parts of the universe are explained, the whole is also explained. He states: “Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable should you afterwards ask me what was the cause of the whole twenty”^{[18](#)}.

This argument is answered by Pruss (2006), who replies that an explanation of the parts gives only a partial explanation for the whole. It does not for example explain why these parts exist and not others, why they exist in the first place rather than not exist, and why they are arranged in the manner in which they are. The example he uses is that a chicken can explain an egg, and an egg explain a chicken, but an infinite chicken/egg sequence cannot explain the existence of any given chicken or egg^{[19](#)}.

The Big Bang Theory is a theory which posits a contingent cause for the contingent universe. As such, it poses the same objections to the Cosmological Argument outlined above, and is also open to the same rebuttals. By arguing that the cause of the universe is something material, it opens itself to the problem of an infinite regress of contingent causes.

Is a Causal Loop Possible?

Another possible alternative for the existence of a Necessary Being is that the universe is the cause for itself. Another form of this argument is that one part of the universe caused another part. It may be argued that the Big Bang Theory is one such type of an argument.

This argument leads to a contradiction. If something were to create itself, then it must have existed before its own existence, and this is impossible. It would also mean that something is a cause and effect at the same time, which is also impossible. It is like saying that the signature of director A is required for director B to sign a document, while the signature of director B is required for director A to sign the document. This document would clearly never be signed^{[20](#)}.

Answering why the Necessary Being needs no cause

One of the most famous objections against the Cosmological Argument is Russell’s question of: ‘who

created God?'²¹. This question seeks a cause for the First Cause or Necessary Being. If everything in the universe requires a cause, and we posit that this cause is God, then why does God not need a cause?

This question is fallacious. The Cosmological Argument does not state that everything requires a cause to bring it into existence. Rather, it argues that contingent beings require a cause. The Necessary Being by definition is not contingent and not in need of a cause. Therefore, the question cannot apply to the Necessary Being. It is not the existence of a thing *per se* that requires it to have a cause, but rather its contingency.

Identity of the First Cause

Having established the need for a Necessary Being, there is also discussion regarding the identity of the Necessary Being. If we accept the existence of such a being, it does not necessarily identify the Necessary Being as a theistic god, with characteristics such as Will or Intention, Omniscience, Benevolence and Omnipotence.

Swinburne (1979) discusses this question by putting forward the idea of a 'personal explanation'. He argues that things need either a 'natural explanation' or a 'personal explanation'. Since there are no precedent events to the 'event' of creation, and no natural laws before the point of singularity, we cannot provide a natural explanation for the universe. The alternative is a personal explanation, that is, the universe was caused by the "intentional action of an intelligent, supernatural agent."²²

This question can also be examined by further into the concept of a Necessary Being. When it comes to contingent beings, positive properties such as knowledge and power may or may not apply to the contingent subject. This is because the contingent subject requires a reason for these properties to apply to it. However, when it comes to the Necessary Being, there is no need for an external cause, and so any positive quality which can be imagined for that being necessarily applies to that being. This does not apply to negative qualities (ignorance, impotence) because these are in reality non-beings or negations of real qualities²³. Thus, the very nature of the Necessary Being requires that this being has any positive property which can be imagined in relation to it.

Implications of the Argument from Contingency

The Argument from Contingency is usually seen as an argument for the existence of God. Yet this argument has a number of other implications. The most important of these is that it argues not only for the Necessary Being as the cause responsible for the occurrence of the world, but also for its persistence. In other words, it seeks to prove not only God as the creator, but also as the sustaining cause of the world. The example is not that of a builder who builds a house then walks away, but rather that of a light from a candle, which is forever sustained by the candle.

This has major repercussions for our belief in God. The role of God as the sustaining cause gives new value to worship and submission to God, which are pivotal aspects of Islamic Theology. This aspect of the argument from contingency takes it from being a purely theoretical or philosophical argument, and gives it direct real-life value. This enhances its relevance to the contemporary world.

It can be seen from the above discussions that the Cosmological argument remains is very relevant to in modern-day discussions about God. The progress of natural sciences means that this argument has been re-examined, but it remains a valid and legitimate proof for the Existence of God not only as a Creator but a Sustaining Cause for the universe.

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¹. Reichenbach, 2012.^[9]^[9]

². Aquinas, 1947, p. 26.^[9]^[9]

³. Subhani, 2008.^[9]^[9]

4. Aquinas, 1947. [1][2]
5. Aquinas, 1947. [1][2]
6. al-Tousi, Tajrid al-I'tiqad. [1][2]
7. Leibniz, 1714, p. 15. [1][2]
8. Reichenbach, 2012. [1][2]
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10. Koons, 1997, pp. 198–199. [1][2]
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