

CLASSICAL THEISM AND THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

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ABSTRACT: This paper provides a critical examination of the cosmological argument for the existence of God within the framework of classical theism. It begins by outlining the standard version of the argument, particularly as formulated by Thomas Aquinas, focusing on the concepts of contingency, necessity, causality, and the 'Unmoved Mover'. The argument posits that a contingent universe, characterized by motion and change, necessitates the existence of an independent, unchanging, and Necessary Being—God. The paper then pivots to a rigorous critique of this position, highlighting a fundamental dilemma: the Unmoved Mover of philosophy is incompatible with the personal, dynamic, and responsive God depicted in the Judeo-Christian scriptures. It argues that biblical portrayals of God show a being who is moved by human suffering, prayer, and repentance, thus exhibiting change and contingency. This scriptural evidence directly contradicts the philosophical requirement of absolute changelessness. The paper concludes that the cosmological argument, by insisting on an immutable God, ultimately fails to support the concept of a "living God" central to religious faith. It results in a philosophical abstraction rather than the personal deity of classical theism, leaving theists with an unresolved contradiction between their philosophical proofs and their theological commitments.

Keywords: *Cosmological Argument, Classical Theism, Thomas Aquinas, Necessary Being, Contingency, Unmoved Mover, Changelessness, Philosophy of Religion.*

INTRODUCTION

Does The Universe Need A Cause? A Dependent World and an Independent Creator. The Greek word for "universe" is *kosmos*. The cosmological argument for the existence of God asserts that the cosmos or universe needed a creator. Suppose you ask: Where did the universe come from? How did it all get started?. The answer provided by the cosmological argument is that the creator made it from nothing (*ex nihilo*). The universe is assumed to be a dependent being. The special term used to express this dependency is *contingency*. If the cosmos is wholly contingent, it needs something that is not contingent or dependent. That is, it must depend on something that is completely and absolutely independent. The special term used to express this absolute independence is *necessity* or *necessary being*. Those who employ the cosmological argument say that the creator alone is necessary being, whereas the universe (world, nature, cosmos) is wholly contingent or dependent. (Sometimes the cosmological argument is called the *causal* argument because it emphasizes the belief that the creator *causes* the world to exist.) .

Could the Universe Be without Beginning or End?

Strictly speaking, the cosmological argument allows for the possibility that the world might be everlasting: that is, without either beginning or termination. But in order for that to be possible, the creator must also be everlasting. At least that is what the cosmological argument contends. To say that the universe might be everlasting is not, however, to deny that it goes through numerous changes and processes. Indeed, some believers in the cosmological argument claim that the changes within the universe are examples (or at least symptoms) of the fact that the universe is contingent rather than necessary. The creator, on the other hand, never changes; he is immutable.

Many Jews, Christians, and Muslims hold that in fact the universe is not everlasting, although it might have been had the creator desired to have a universe with him throughout all eternity. Indeed, many believers say that although the universe has not always existed, God will nevertheless see to it that some aspects of it (e.g., at least

some of the people in it) will never perish. However, these believers hold that the world once did not exist. Or at least if it did, it existed only as a possibility in the creator's mind.

Change and Motion

There are various versions of the cosmological argument, but I am offering you the standard version. The name of Thomas Aquinas is most readily associated with this argument. As a Christian theologian, Thomas has enjoyed considerable influence on the thinking of classical theists in the Western world. According to Thomas, we know that the universe is contingent or dependent on something beyond itself, because around us everywhere we observe that the members of the universe are moving and changing. Today we know even better than did Thomas that, say, a huge rock is changing according to its own time schedule. A large boulder in Colorado is an entire city of atoms moving and whirling about. Furthermore, the wind and rain are slowly but surely changing the face of proud and sturdy boulders. In short, the whole world seems to be perpetually in motion, each part changing at its own particular rate.

Now, says Thomas, if you observe carefully, you will see that nothing moves itself. Before the pages of this book turned, *you* turned them. Or if not you, then someone else, or perhaps the wind turned them. In any case, whatever moves is moved by something else, which Thomas calls the 'instrument'. You are the instrument for turning the pages of your book. But before that, some other instrument moved you to turn the pages, and so on and on. But how far is on and on?. Here is where some classical theists step in with their causal argument for God's existence. They argue that it is absurd to believe that all this moving could be traced back infinitely into the past. Somewhere along the way there had to be something or someone who is not moved. This being must exist, not as a part of the series of movements, but as the *originator* of the series. Why is this so?. The answer of some classical theists is that if the first mover is itself moving, then it is not really the first mover after all. It is only an instrument. So we must keep pushing back until we finally do come to the real and true First Mover. Inasmuch as it is not itself moved, it may be called the Unmoved Mover. Thus, the First or Prime Mover and the Unmoved Mover turn out to be one and the same eternal reality that never changes.

First Cause Is Necessary Cause

However, Thomas Aquinas sets for himself an even more difficult task, for he is not denying the possibility of an *everlasting world or series of motions and changes going back through an infinity of time*. In other words, he realizes that the idea of an everlasting world, without beginning or end, is not absurd. But he thinks it *is* absurd to think that an everlasting world or universe could run by its own power. What Thomas is concerned to show is that motion or change itself—even within an everlasting universe—is a sign of *contingency*. That is, wherever there is change, there is dependency. So, even if there were an infinite series of changes running forever into the remote past, nevertheless this *infinite series* would itself require something unchanging and independent to maintain it. Hence, for Thomas, the First Cause must not be understood to be merely the first in a long series of causes. Rather, it is the Ultimate Cause or Necessary Cause. It is the necessary cause in the sense that, without it, the universe as a system of motions and changes would never have come into existence in the first place. To throw light on Thomas' point, an illustration may be taken from a person's footprints in the sand. The prints could not make themselves. The person making them is their cause. Of course, it is conceivable that an infinity of footprints might exist. But if so, then there must be also an everlasting person making them for infinity. If the world is everlasting, it must be perpetually caused by the everlasting creator. Without the creator, the world could no more exist than could footprints without someone to make them.

Might the Universe Never Have Been?

According to the cosmological argument, there is not one thing in the entire universe that just had to be. This is a way of saying that things might never have come into existence at all. So, why did *anything* come into existence? Why did the *whole universe* come into existence?. Why should there be something rather than nothing?. The cosmological argument maintains that there is no way to answer this question without admitting the existence of a Necessary Being. It is a Necessary Being for two reasons. First, it exists necessarily in that it could not do other than continue to exist. Second, its existence is *absolutely necessary* for the existence of everything else. All other beings are contingent. They depend on one another; they all depend on the

Necessary Being. Therefore, according to the cosmological argument, this self-contained Being is the ultimate answer to the question, "Why should there be something rather than nothing?". We are told that the universe exists because the Necessary Being or God wanted it and created it. Implicit in this answer, of course, is the assumption that this God enjoyed the *power* to do what he wanted.

Does Necessary Being Depend on Contingent Being?

The cosmological argument says that we come to the view of Necessary Being as we come to realize that our world is thoroughly contingent. Inasmuch as our world obviously does exist, there must be some Being that is not dependent, and upon which the world absolutely depends for its existence. But let us speculate a bit on this issue. Suppose there were no universe or world at all. Then would there be a God or Necessary Being?. Thomas' answer is that God would still exist as he had always existed. If Thomas did not accept this conclusion, he would have to say that God's existence depends upon the world's existence. Thomas thinks that he has already shown that the world might not have existed. But he is not prepared to say that if there had been no world, then God also might never have existed. So, for Thomas, God exists whether or not the world exists. In no way is God dependent on anything.

But let us just suppose for the moment that God *is* dependent on something for his existence. What then?. Well, if that thing had never come into existence, then God would never have existed. Or if that thing on which God depends should suddenly cease to exist, then God, too, would cease to exist. Of course, if the believers in the cosmological argument are correct, then the thing on which God depends would certainly never have existed in the first place. Why?. Because in order for it to exist, it must draw its existence from some being that does not depend on anything for its own existence. And that being would be God, the only true Necessary Being. Thomas' point is that if there were no Necessary Being or God, there would today be absolutely nothing, no world at all. But inasmuch as it is obvious to any sane person that something does in fact exist today, we must conclude that there exists a Necessary Being who is absolutely independent.

An Infinite Time Ago and an Infinite Time in the Future

Followers of Thomas Aquinas offer the following very interesting and curious argument. They say, in effect, that the universe would have used itself up by now had it not been constantly replenished by the Necessary Being. In responding to this, one critic of the Thomists claims that the universe may eventually perish. But he sees no reason to insist that it must have *already* perished. However, this point of disagreement between Thomists and their critics illustrates just how very complicated is the notion of infinite time. A proponent of the cosmological argument might possibly argue that we have *already* gone through an infinity of time. In which case, the world would have already ceased to exist— *unless* there were an infinite God to replenish it.

Let me spell out this argument. If a universe (without God) really does go *back* infinitely into time and is without any beginning point whatsoever, then has it not *already been continuing infinitely?* Imagine the universe at a point a trillion years ago. At that point it will have already been in existence for an infinite amount of time. In fact, at any point in the dim, remote past you could say the universe will already have been infinitely old. To be sure, various forms of the universe have come and gone, but as a whole it has been going on forever, and hence it has already passed through an infinity of time. Now, this argument seems to imply that it is impossible for the universe to have an infinite time in the *past* without having also an infinite time in the *future*. If the universe had no beginning, neither can it have an ending. Only if something has a *beginning* can it have an *ending*. This implies further that if we had sufficient evidence to say that the universe will eventually perish totally, then we could conclude that it must have had a beginning and hence does not reach back infinitely into the past.

Unfortunately, it is a matter of honest debate as to whether we can say that the world either will *end* in the future or once *began* at some time in the past. To be sure, there are various *forms* of the universe that have come into being and passed away. But that is different from the universe in its entirety. There is something curious about the argumentation as to whether the universe is or is not infinite in time. If the universe does go back infinitely in time, and hence forward infinitely into the future, then it

would seem to be dependent on nothing outside itself. Hence, it would itself be the Necessary Being!. It would need nothing other than itself. On the other hand, if the universe did begin, then it would seem to have either come from nothing or to have been created by God. Classical theists are forced to assert the curious doctrine that God made the world *out of nothing*. They have to assert this in order to avoid admitting that God found it necessary to make use of some everlasting raw material or energy that he did not create. Plato could believe that a boundless supply of raw material has existed forever along with God, and that God shapes the world out of this endless reservoir of energy. But classical theists insist that God was not dependent on either this or anything else. Hence, if he is the creator, he must create from nothing.

SOME PROBLEMS FOR THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Does God Change? Is He Moved?

One of the favorite biblical passages among those who emphasize the cosmological argument is Malachi 3:6: "*For I the Lord do not change*". There are many other passages indicating the changelessness of God. Among Christians, Jesus Christ is regarded as a member of the Godhead. Hence, when a New Testament writer says that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever," Christians often assume that this is a reference to God's changelessness.

On the other hand, the Bible is filled with passages indicating that God does change in at least some respects. Amos 7:3; Jonah 4:2; Exodus 32:12 and 14; 1 Samuel 15:35; and 2 Samuel 24:16 are some of the passages asserting that God sometimes *repented*. Attempting to qualify such passages so that God is not made to appear to have done something very evil for which he had to repent, theologians sometimes explain that the word 'repent' really means *change*. That is, God repented in the sense that he changed his mind, intention, action or attitude. It is extremely difficult to sweep under the rug all the passages in the Bible that portray God as being moved by such things as prayers, the sins of people, and 'their afflictions'. The natural way of understanding these passages that portray God as a personal being is to suppose that the writers felt that something *caused* God to do one thing rather than another. In

short, God, like things of the universe, changes whenever certain conditions come into play. Throughout the Bible it is assumed that God

responds to human beings. Indeed, when saying that God exemplifies loving kindness, believers regard it to be his very nature to respond in some ways rather than other ways. People effect in him certain changes and responses. If *they* change in certain ways, *he* will change in certain ways. "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.". Most of the biblical writers seem to take for granted contingent and conditional dimensions in the life of the deity.

God is regarded as *moved* by the sufferings of people. The Greek philosopher Aristotle felt it is necessary to conclude that his God did not so much as know that human beings or the world even existed. Why?. Because to know something outside oneself—even God's own self—is to *be affected and influenced by what one knows*. Hence, Aristotle's Unmoved Mover could know only his own thoughts in one eternal moment: absolutely nothing could touch or move him. But the Hebrews and Christians could not easily think of their God in this way. To them, God is involved, active, alive, dynamic, personal; and therefore *he moves and is moved*. For example, according to Judges 2:18 (RSV), God saved bands of Hebrews from their enemies. Why?. Because "the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.". Unlike Aristotle, the early Hebrews could not conceive of a God who would not *react* to the misery of his people.

To be sure, there are a number of passages in the Bible that assert that God does not change or repent. But a careful reading of the contexts reveals that Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of God's absolute changelessness is not affirmed in most of these passages. Rather, the passages generally emphasize God's steadfastness in love, or his reliability in keeping promises, or simply his own everlasting life. The idea of a changeless being may perhaps be implicit in some of these passages. But this is a question for serious debate.

Theologians have worried themselves greatly about the thought of God's changelessness. One of the early Christian churchmen, Cyprian, ridiculed one group of Christians by giving them the nickname "Patipassians.". In essence, he was

rebuking them for saying that God the Father suffered and was moved. It was conceded that this could be said of God the *Son*. But Christians were divided as to whether this could be said also of the Heavenly Father. The parable of the prodigal son suggests that at least Jesus thought of the Heavenly Father as being greatly moved by the sinner's repentance.

Metaphysics and Metaphor

One approach used by theologians who hold on to the notion that God cannot really change is to say that all the passages referring to God as changing must be read as *metaphors*. Then the passages that emphasize God as unchanging must be read as fundamentally metaphysical or *literal* characterizations of God. Unfortunately, such a device not only does great violence to the Bible, but invites everyone to turn into a metaphor any passage of the Bible that happens not to fit with his pet theory. It would seem to be more forthright simply to disagree with some of the biblical writers than to force them to submit to a theory foreign to them.

The Dilemma of the Cosmological Argument

The dilemma of those asserting the absolute changelessness of God is this: Either (1) affirm that God is changeless or (2) give up the assertion that he is at least personal, active, and dynamic. If the second part of the dilemma is accepted, then what remains is a flat, changeless something that hardly qualifies as a living God. But what would follow if theists should conclude that change and motion are a part of the makeup of God?. Well, *if* the cosmological argument is right, then God would have to be regarded as a *contingent* being in need of some more fundamental Necessary Being to keep him from falling into nothingness. In other words, the cosmological argument for a changeless Necessary Being is not an argument for a living God.

But Can There Be a Totally Unchanging Being?

Perhaps the reason the biblical writers could not help portraying God as changing and being moved is that change and movement are a necessary part of a living being. Aristotle's concept of God seems hardly to be that of a living being; he is portrayed as little more than an abstract intellect. Some Christians have wanted to think of God as a pure intellect without feelings and embodiment. But this will not do, for even the *life* of the intellect is filled with change. The thinking mind is alert to new evidence,

is sensitive, passionate to learn, open to change, and moved by evidence and logic. Aristotle's God knows nothing about life as it is lived. He enjoys no surprises, no novel experiences. He has just one eternal day. He is not so much a mind or intellect, as a gallery of ideas and thoughts. The living mind, on the other hand, is stimulated, stirred, excited, thwarted and inspired, challenged and agitated. These are all action words involving change, movement, and a measure of contingency.

Some Christian theologians have wanted to make the Bible's versions of God more sedate and passionless, more like Aristotle's impersonal, abstract, Unmoved Mover. The cosmological argument, for example, postulates an intellectual monstrosity—the Unmoved Mover—which not only is different from most of the biblical views of God, but downright incompatible with them. The God of the cosmological argument is not at all like the God of Abraham (who bargained with God) or of Jacob (who wrestled with him or one of his theophanies). Moses is said to have talked with God as a friend and to have even worked a deal with God to see at least his divine back. This God is hardly the unmoved, changeless Necessary Being that Thomas' cosmological argument projects.

Can Perfection Change and Still Be Perfect?

It is necessary to consider again why Thomas and many other classical theists consider change in God to be such an abhorrent notion. This dread of change has a long and understandable history. For one thing, change and time eventually bring death to every human being. So, if God could somehow be exempted from all change, then he might escape death altogether. This way of thinking has very primitive roots. It starts with an active divine agent who works wonders and exerts considerable influence. Change is good because it manifests his power and life. But such a deity ought to live forever. Therefore, he comes to be regarded as not subject to the ravages of time. Eventually God is simply taken out of time altogether, as if believers fear that if he were touched by the finger of time, then even God would be unable to overcome its touch of death.

Early concepts of God—even in the Old Testament—do not always picture him as Perfect Being in Thomas' sense of perfection. A careful reading of early Old

Testament passages show God to be quite imperfect. He is sometimes cruel, hotheaded, short-sighted, and forgetful of who he is or of the deals he has made. As the idea of God becomes more or less refined in the thinking of various Hebrews, the idea of a Perfect Being comes to the forefront. And such a lofty idea tends to remove God from all settings and contexts. He is eventually removed from the entire universe.

The idea of change became a terrible threat to the idea of Perfect Being. Consider the following dilemma: If God changes, he must change either for the worse or for the better. (1) If he changes for the *worse*, he ceases to be a Perfect Being. (2) But if he changes for the *better*, then he must not have been perfect in the first place!. In the latter alternative, the fear of change is implicit. To change is to admit the *need* for change. And to admit need is to admit that one is not wholly complete as he *is*. To say that someone needs something is to say that in some sense he is *dependent* on it. And you recall that the cosmological argument is built on the premise that God as Necessary Being depends on nothing for anything. God is wholly independent. But perhaps while God needs nothing to sustain his *existence*, he does need something to improve the *quality* of his life. This is a very touchy issue for classical theists. What the cosmological argument ends up with is a God who needs absolutely nothing and consequently *has nothing but bare necessary existence*. This can hardly be called the "living God."

Any attempt to use the cosmological argument for Necessary Being *partially* to support classical theism runs into the possibility of using the same argument in defense of the view of the universe without the God hypothesis.

Back to the Universe

Hence, we are brought back to the possibility of accepting without contradiction the idea of a universe having change and motion but without a transcendent deity. Apparently it is not possible to talk consistently of a Necessary Being who is somehow exempted from all change. Perhaps the cosmological argument arrived surprisingly and finally at a ghost town because it started on the wrong track. Perhaps it is a great mistake to say that a universe cannot exist on its own if it contains

motion and change. Furthermore, if theists allow that perhaps God, too, enjoys change and motion, they will still have to face the following questions: Why postulate God at all?. Why not simply start with the universe, and let that be the whole of reality?. If the theory of God is dropped, we might then seek to understand the things of the universe in terms of their interrelations, laws, patterns, and conditions. The attempt to go outside the universe (whatever that means) for an explanation of what is in it simply adds an extra burden to an already difficult job of understanding the things and relationships of the universe.

Without a Transcendent Deity

The Hebrews and Christians have always had trouble with the idea of a God which transcends the universe. As one Old Testament scholar writes: "After the destruction of the temple in 587/6 B.C., the idea of God's immanence was dealt a severe blow. More and more God was envisioned as remote and otherworldly. In this excessive stress of transcendence the chasm between God and man became so great that some of the postexilic prophets believed that God communicated his message by means of heavenly messengers. Zechariah, for example, refers constantly to 'the messenger [angel] who talked with me' (Zech. 1:1, 13, 14, 19; 2:3, etc.)." .

In the Middle Ages, God was taken by many to be so remote as to be hardly real. Common people thought of themselves as dealing with Mary and the saints, who presumably had known what it is like to live in a world of change and movement. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation seems to come from an unconscious drive to give the transcendent God some flesh and blood, to embody him, to get him informed about the real world, to move him. Christians did not want to believe that God is wholly uninterested in them. They conceived of God as initiating the Incarnation as a plan to put him in *touch* with human life. Christianity demanded a God who is more than pure thoughts or mere word. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.". The New Testament writers consciously said that God is revealing himself to the human race. Unconsciously they seemed to be saying also that the revelation is a two-way street that the transcendent God is also in need of *becoming involved*. He is in need of learning, responding to the needs of mortals and developing new sensitivities. Indeed, this development in their concept of God

eventually led to the notion that God is actually more than one person, which is perhaps a way of saying that Christians could not fully harmonize God as changeless being with God as one who suffers and is moved.

The point here is not that a transcendent Necessary Being must take personal interest in *human* affairs if he is to exist. Rather, the point is that the very idea of a Necessary Being void of change and motion cannot be harmonized with the views in the Bible that portray him as very much moved, active involved, and changing. Yet to bring change and contingency into the Necessary Being is simply to destroy the cosmological argument for the existence of a God who is free from contingency. The dilemma of classical theism resides in its desire to have its cake and eat it, too. The proponents of the argument want, on the one hand, to have an Absolute — the Necessary Being taken to extreme. On the other hand, they want a religion that portrays a vital and moving interrelationship between this Absolute and humanity. The philosopher F. H. Bradley states rather well the persistent illness of classical theism: "A discrepancy worth our notice is the position of God in the universe. We may say that in religion God tends always to pass beyond himself. He is necessarily led to end in the Absolute, which for religion is not God... If you identify the Absolute with God, that is not the God of religion. If again you separate them, God becomes a finite factor in the Whole. And the effort of religion is to put an end to, and break down, this relationship — a relation which, none the less, it essentially presupposes. Hence, short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and short of God, religion is lost with him. It is this difficulty which appears in the problem of the religious self-consciousness." .

Classical theists, insisting on both having their cake and eating it, cannot resolve the dilemma posed by the idea of a changeless Necessary Being. Hence, they must settle for pronouncing what has become a mere verbal ritual — "God not only transcends the world, but is also immanently involved in the world.". They have had to let it go at that.

Where Did the World Come From?

Classical theists do not wish to say that God made the universe from some sort of material or energy that he discovered, for that would entail that there already existed

a reality that was not dependent on him. Hence, God is said to have created the universe *ex nihilo* —out of nothing. Some classical theists choose to label this as a miracle. They are not, however, willing to take seriously the hypothesis that *the universe simply came from nothing* without the presence of God on the scene. The notion of a universe just coming from nothing does indeed disturb our expectations. But classical theism taxes us doubly. It not only asks us to believe in creation out of nothing, but asks us to accept an Unmoved Necessary Being who was nevertheless moved to create a world. The first alternative (i.e., the universe came from nothing) is at least as easy to accept as the second alternative (i.e., the universe was created out of nothing, and in addition a creator exists). If we are going to have a miracle, why insist on *two* —the universe plus a God?. Why not just one miracle—a universe?. It is mere habit of mind to suppose that a miracle must have a miracle worker.

There is perhaps another answer to the question regarding the origin of the universe. Some theists believe that it is possible to hold that God has both an unchanging side and a changing side to his nature. Some of these theists do not worry themselves with the question as to whether God might never have existed. They concede that God *might* not have existed at all. They profess to see no necessary reason (i.e., no causal ground or logical ground) for either God's existence or his nonexistence. But, according to these theists, God simply does exist, and that is a fortunate thing for us, for without him we would not exist. These theists take a rather straightforward approach. Since God happens to exist, he is the reason why the universe now exists. Hence, at least half of the argument of Necessary Being still remains. That is, God is seen as the *necessary condition or cause* of the universe. Without him, the universe would not be. The other half of the doctrine of Necessary Being is left hanging, for these theists have not fully come to terms with the question as to *whether God could eventually pass out of existence* (and the universe perish along with him). Classical theists have always been concerned to come up with some guarantee that God would never perish. But the cosmological argument can show no more than that the survival of the universe depends upon the survival of God. Even this conclusion is questionable. But in any case, the cosmological argument cannot show that God will not eventually perish and the world along with him.

Must the Universe Have a Beginning?

There is the hypothesis that the universe had no beginning at all. To be sure, it has undergone various changes and qualifications. But even the Big Bang theory of the universe's origin presupposes that there was already something in existence that exploded. For all we know, the "structure" of the universe as we think of it today is just one of an infinite series of "forms" that the universe takes. Opponents of theism insist that it makes sense to say that the universe happens to explode into, or to develop, new forms (or that it happens to exist at all). At least it makes as much sense to say this as to say that God happens to exist and happens to want to create a world. Even if we say that God was moved to create it, we could still ask why he happened to be moved. What was it that moved him?. Was it something inside or outside him?. If inside, then what moved it—and so on and on. Hence, even within God's own life the problem of *an infinite series of motions* breaks out with such a vengeance that Thomas could not face the problem squarely.

Unfortunately, no matter how transcendent a hypothesis we produce, the nagging question remains: Is it the living God, or is it a mere lifeless, unmoved abstraction?. Of course, there is still the possibility of thinking of the universe and God as being the *same* reality. In that sense, God or the universe might be called the only Necessary Being in the sense of depending on nothing for his or its existence. Defenders of the cosmological argument have rejected this blending of God and the universe, but some of the proponents of the *ontological* argument have boldly asserted it and argued for it.

Conclusion

The cosmological argument, a cornerstone of classical theism, ultimately proves to be self-defeating when scrutinized. Its central thrust is to establish a changeless, Unmoved Mover as the Necessary Being upon which the contingent universe depends. However, this paper has demonstrated that such a being is fundamentally at odds with the God of religious experience and scripture, particularly within the Judeo-Christian tradition. The biblical God is personal, responsive, and affected by

the world—attributes that imply change and, by the argument's own logic, contingency.

This creates an irreconcilable dilemma for the classical theist. To accept the argument's conclusion is to embrace an impersonal, Aristotelian abstraction that is unrecognizable as the "living God" of faith. To insist on a personal, dynamic God is to undermine the very premise of absolute changelessness upon which the argument for a Necessary Being rests. The attempts to resolve this by treating biblical descriptions of a changing God as mere metaphor are intellectually unsatisfying and risk undermining scriptural integrity. Consequently, the cosmological argument fails in its primary purpose: it cannot logically bridge the gap between a philosophical first cause and the personal deity that classical theism seeks to affirm. The argument forces a choice between a lifeless Absolute and a contingent God, leaving the universe itself as a plausible candidate for a self-sustaining, brute-fact reality.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented, the following recommendations for future scholarly inquiry are proposed:

1. **Exploration of Alternative Theistic Models:** Scholars should further investigate theistic models that do not rely on the classical doctrine of absolute divine immutability. Frameworks such as process theology, which posits a dipolar God who is both eternal and temporal, may offer a more coherent way to reconcile the concepts of a supreme being with the reality of change and relationship.
2. **Comparative Philosophical Analysis:** A deeper comparative study is needed between the philosophical concept of the Absolute, as described by figures like F. H. Bradley, and the theological concept of a personal God. This would help clarify whether these two concepts are necessarily mutually exclusive or if a viable synthesis is possible.
3. **Theological Re-evaluation of Divine Attributes:** Theologians within classical traditions are encouraged to re-evaluate the attribute of changelessness. Instead

of absolute immutability, concepts like steadfastness of character, faithfulness, and eternal purpose could be explored as more biblically and logically sound interpretations of divine perfection.

4. **Engagement with Modern Cosmology:** Philosophical theologians should engage more deeply with contemporary cosmological theories, such as multiverse hypotheses or quantum fluctuation models of the universe's origin. These scientific concepts challenge the classical premises of causality and a singular beginning, offering new ground for the debate about whether the universe requires an external cause.

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