

0 Cosmological arguments

Cosmological arguments, like teleological arguments, start with a premise about the world: namely, that something exists, is contingent, or is dependent. They are almost always deductive rather than inductive.

1 Clarke's formulation

"... it is absolutely and undeniable certain that *something has existed from all eternity* ... For, since something now is, it is evident that something always was, otherwise the things that now are must have been produced out of nothing, absolutely and without a cause, which is a plain contradiction in terms. For, to say a thing is produced and yet that there is no cause at all for that production, is to say that something is effected when it is effected by nothing, that is, at the same time when it is not effected at all. Whatever exists has a cause, a reason, a ground of its existence, a foundation on which its existence relies, a ground or reason why it does exist rather than not exist, either in the necessity of its own nature (and then it must have been of itself eternal), or in the will of some other being (and then that other being must, at least in the order of nature and causality, have existed before it)." (Clark, 597)

Argument:

1. There exists a temporary thing E.
2. If so, there must have been a cause C of E's existence.
3. C is either E itself or something distinct from E.
4. If $C = E$, then C must be of nature necessary.
5. If C is of nature necessary, then it's of nature eternal.
6. On the other hand, if $C \neq E$, then C must be temporally prior to E.
7. If C is temporally prior to E, then there must have been a cause C_1 of C, and so on ... [Note: this is a fudge of sorts, for hopefully obvious reasons.]
8. This regress will either terminate at some C_0 that is of nature necessary, or will go on ad infinitum.
9. Either way (5 or 8), something has existed from all eternity.

Why does Clarke think that this argument gets you a single thing that exists eternally rather than a series of temporary things that go back $-\infty$ in time? The argument for this further conclusion appears in section II: (Notice that he adds *immutability* or *unchangeability* to the features of this thing.)

1. Either there is some immutable, eternal being, or there is an infinite regress of temporary, dependent beings.
2. If there is an infinite regress of temporary, dependent beings, then either the chain is caused to exist by something external to it or something internal to it.

3. It cannot be caused or explained by something external to it, because it includes everything.
4. Each being in the chain is temporary and dependent, and hence cannot cause or explain itself, and so cannot cause or explain the chain.
5. Therefore the chain cannot be caused or explained by something internal to it.
6. Therefore there cannot be an infinite regress of temporary, dependent beings.
7. Therefore, an eternal, immutable being exists.

“An infinite succession, therefore, of merely dependent beings without any original independent cause is a series of things that has neither necessity, nor cause, nor any reason or ground at all of its existence either within itself or from without.” (Clarke, 599)

1. One idea here is that an infinite regress of beings would also lack an *explanation*. So his objection is that such a chain would lack both a causal explanation and a non-causal explanation or reason for its existence.
2. Clarke concludes that this eternal, immutable being must also be self-existent or necessarily existent (which he takes to be the same thing), as that *would* explain its existence (non-causally, that is).
 - This is because it is not uncaused or caused by some external thing.
 - “Now to be self-existent is not to be produced by itself, for that is an express contradiction, but it ... to exist by an absolute necessity originally in the nature of the thing itself. And this necessity must be antecedent, not indeed in time, to the existence of the being itself (because that is eternal), but it must be antecedent in the natural order of our ideas to our supposition of its being.” (Clarke, 600)

Objections:

- It makes no sense to talk about the cause or explanation of the totality of things. (Russell’s mother example)
- It makes sense, but the explanation is provided once we explain each member of the totality, which we can.

3 Rowe and PSR

Rowe denies this premise in the cosmological argument: “Whatever exists is either a dependent being or an independent being,” where a *dependent* being is “a being that has the reason of its existence in the causal efficacy of some other being” and an *independent* being is “a being that has the reason of its existence within its own nature.” (Rowe, 602)

Principle of Sufficient Reason (Strong): Whatever exists must have an explanation of its existence.

Principle of Sufficient Reason (Weak): Whatever comes into existence must have an explanation of its existence.

Proof of strong PSR?

1. If something exists without a cause, it is caused by nothing.
2. Nothing cannot be the cause of something.
3. Therefore, whatever exists must have a cause.

Can strong PSR be known to be true without proof?

- Compare: truths of mathematics, etc.
- Strong PSR would be necessary and analytic.
- But can't we imagine that things exist uncaused?

Perhaps PSR is supported by pragmatic principles.

- That is, it might be something we need to assume for scientific research or even for ordinary life.
- But is this true?