

Arguments for the Existence of God

Ontological Argument-

1. God either exists necessarily or God's existence is impossible.
2. God's existence is possible
3. It is not impossible that God exists
4. God's existence is necessary
5. Therefore God exists

Objection-

Assuming God's existence is equivocal to the existence of laws and mathematical properties, and assuming that laws and mathematical properties exist in a relevant and comprehensible mode of existence, the first clause of the first premise leads to complications and self-contradiction. The first clause states that God exists necessarily. This conclusion was drawn from the analytic question of whether God's existence is necessary or contingent. The conclusion (God exists necessarily) was reached based on the logic that the Cosmos is contingent and therefore *must* have had a necessarily existing agent to account for its existence. The flaw with that logic is that it can only be reached after the existence of the Cosmos is taken into account ("Myth of the given"). If the Cosmos did NOT exist, (which, according to the logic of this proposition, was initially the case), God's existence would either be contingent or impossible, as God would have nothing to account for or be accounted for. Therefore, the first premise should be read as follows:

1. God either exists contingently or it is impossible.

Following this premise, God's existence is either impossible or unnecessary. Therefore, the argument is invalid.

Furthermore, the supposition that God's existence is necessarily *true* cannot lead the variables in that statement to *exist*. Taliaferro brings an analogous example of God's necessary existence in the form of a mathematical formula. Just as $1+1=2$ is necessarily *true*, so is the statement God=necessary existence. Following that same logic, one can justify the existence of nearly anything they can conjure up as a necessarily true statement. For Example: Pegasus= Horse + Wings is a necessarily true statement. How can this statement lead to the conclusion that a Pegasus exists, let alone exists necessarily?!

GRADE: 4/5 (for identifying and setting up one version of the argument.)

Comment [dp1]: Goldbach's conjecture. This is a new and rather logically desperate move it seems to me to appeal to this logic to arrive at necessary existence. I am not convinced that Goldbach's conjecture helps us conclude anything about God except as Kant already demonstrated in its analyticity, that the CONCEPT of God logically includes the CONCEPT of necessary existence. But once we reject the CONCEPT of God as vacuous along with its entailment of necessary existence you are left with nothing at all. For Kant, then it was a different kind of necessity, the transcendental necessity of a grounding for morality, which cannot be grounded in experience, that gives the belief in such a moral guarantor its legitimacy. But that too is controversial.

Comment [dp2]: Means ambiguous or unclear.

Comment [dp3]: So I do not understand how I am to relate the concept of God to the existence of laws and mathematical properties

Comment [dp4]: So I do not see how to arrive at this conclusion.

Comment [dp5]: The ontological argument does not use the premises or the conclusion of the cosmological argument to generate its premises. Rather, it is the logical self contradiction inherent in thinking the concept of God without also asserting his necessary existence, a purely logical argument for the being of God.

Comment [dp6]: This does not deal with the concept of God who is by definition not contingent. I would agree that the ontological argument does not work, but it can't be due to this line of reasoning.

Comment [dp7]: The claim that God is a unique concept is the typical response to this and that you would be right about anything else, but not God. In other words the ontological argument ONLY works with God and nothing else. That actually seems to be correct... conceptually and logically. BUT, as Kant points out, there is some question whether one can legitimately use the notion of existence as necessary to anything ACTUAL in the phenomenal realm. Existence only applies to the phenomenal realm, yet God is by definition a non phenomenal being. But I want to caution you here, that we have already discovered in our course that such speculative arguments cannot operate effectively merely on the basis of logic alone or even definitions that are based on such seeming axioms as "you cannot get something from nothing." Miller and Guerriere raise the question of whether speculative arguments that operate solely within the logic of propositions can have any purchase at all without the initial phenomenologically accessible existential experience from which the question of the sacred can arise.

Cosmological Argument-

Dr. William L. Craig's highly accredited version of this argument is as follows:

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause
2. The Universe began to exist
3. Therefore the Universe has a cause
4. That cause is God

Objection-

The initial flaw with all of the arguments for God's existence presented in Taliaferro's book is their lack of content. The nature of these arguments is not to prove God's existence, but rather they give skeptics permission to think outside the realm of the mundane. The problem with the cosmological argument, as well as the others, is the failure to present an argument to prove that it is God and not multiple Gods or some fictional characters invented by man. This argument leaves no more reason to posit God than to posit a Unicorn or Fairy! As famously presented in Ockham's razor: Do not posit additional identities if it is unnecessary.

Another flaw with the cosmological argument is the very nature of the argument. The argument states that the Universe began to exist, therefore must have a cause. Once a God is posited to account for the cause of the Universe, the question immediately arises- what caused God to exist? This leads to an infinite regress and therefore the argument is not valid. It is only wishful thinking to make the assumption that one of the causes is uncaused and that uncaused cause is God and no other identity.

Your objections as they stand are not successful, but you do identify and demonstrate the type of thinking of such speculative argumentation. For a first outing in an introductory course that covers as much as we have, this serves the purpose of becoming familiar with these types of speculative arguments. You can see that speculative argumentation regarding God is a creative and critical task requiring significant skill in reasoning. You also have seen in our course reasons to think that such speculative arguments are secondary or derivative at best.

Comment [dp8]: Even if one were convinced of the previous sub-conclusion, That the univers must have a cause, one would not be forced to posit God as this self-caused cause of the universe. But since we traditionally use the term God in this way, it has some justification.

Comment [dp9]: That is correct. However, the arguments do not require content but only logical efficacy. We have found reasons to see such speculative argumentation as secondary or derivative due to lack of existential content and not capable of getting to the salvational need issue that lies at the heart of religion and not in speculative theology as a merely theoretical enterprise.

Comment [dp10]: What an interesting way to put it. Is that tongue in cheek?

Comment [dp11]: It is precisely Ockham's razor that the cosmological argument makes use of in asserting that a) no scientific argument can give an account of why there is anything at all and B) The world cannot be its own cause because it is contingent C) in the absence of a better hypothesis, the God hypothesis is warranted and D) for the same reason, we do not need to posit multiple causes (gods, or other entities) when one will do (the Law of Parsimony in Ockhams's Razor). Not saying that one cannot argue against this, but it must be carried out well, not merely asserted

Comment [dp12]: That is a good first objection. But the rejoinder is that the concept of God excludes contingency. If it did not, A) it would not be God and B) it would not work as an adequate explanation (Ockham's razor, in other words, do not posit explanations that can't possibly do the job intended)