

Arguments for God's existence

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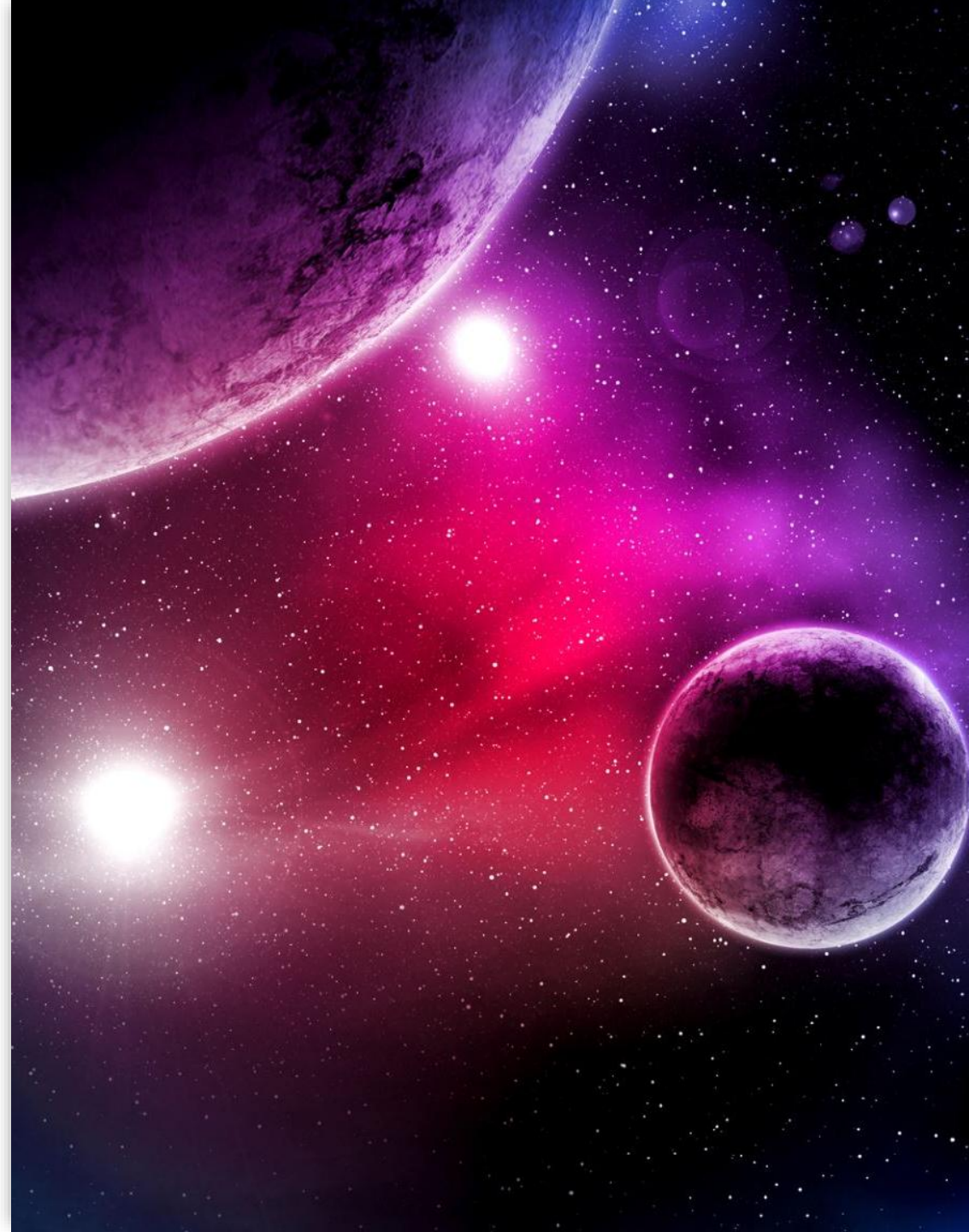
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Arguments for God's existence

- Cosmological Argument
- Teleological Argument
- Moral Argument
- Ontological Argument
- Argument from Beauty
- Religious Experience
- Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth
- Argument from Rationality

Cosmological Argument

- A family of arguments which seeks to demonstrate the **existence of a sufficient reason or first cause** of the existence of the cosmos.





3 basic types of the cosmological argument

- **Kalam cosmological argument** for a First cause of the beginning of the universe
- **Thomist cosmological argument** for a sustaining Ground of Being of the world
- **Leibnizian cosmological argument** for a Sufficient Reason why something exists rather than nothing.

Aquinas' cosmological argument



Aquinas cosmological argument

- Aquinas' seeks a cause which is first not in the temporal sense but in the sense of rank.
- Not temporal (time-based): Aquinas is not asking, "What happened first, the first event?" (like the first domino to fall in history).
- But hierarchical (rank-based): "What is the ultimate source that everything else depends on right now?"
- Aquinas: "If the world and motion (everything) have a first beginning, some cause must be clearly posited for this origin of the world and of motion."





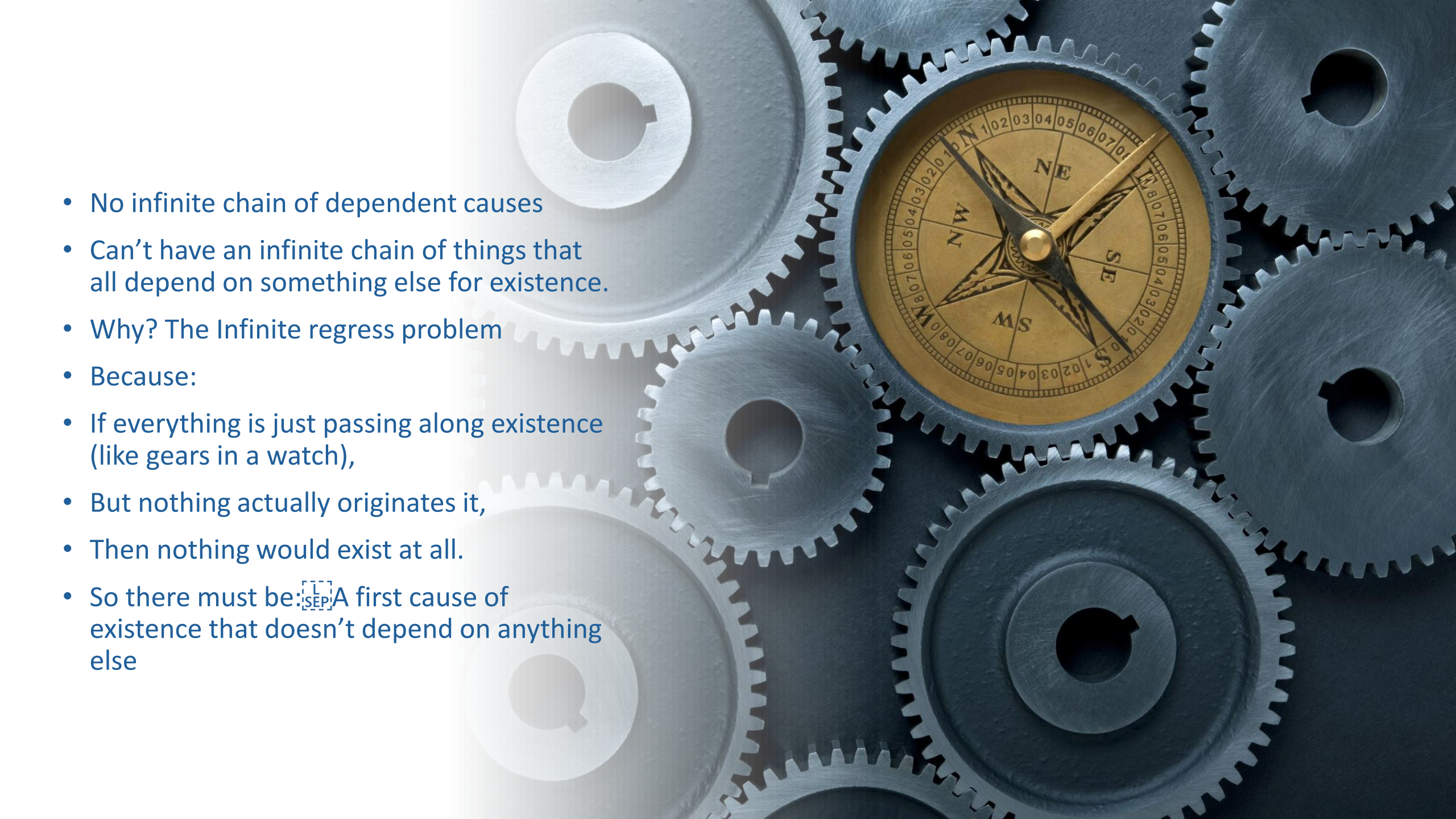
Aquinas cosmological argument

- Aquinas argued for God's existence on the assumption of the eternity of the world.
- Aquinas' metaphysic:
- Every existing finite thing is composed of essence and existence.
- Therefore, radically contingent.
- Essence = what a thing is (e.g., "a tree," "a human")
- Existence = the fact that it actually is real.
- For an individual thing to exist, existence must be conjoined with that essence (an act of being).

Aquinas cosmological argument

- Act of being (existence) involves a continual bestowal of being, or the thing would be annihilated.
- Essence (potentiality) without the bestowal of being would not exist.
- Things can't give themselves existence (No substance can actualize itself)
- For in order to bestow being upon itself, it would have to be already actual.
- A pure potentiality cannot actualize itself but requires some external cause.

- Aquinas argued that **there cannot be an infinite regress of causes of being** (because in such a series all the causes would be merely instrumental and so no being would be produced, just as no motion would be produced in a watch without a spring even if it had an infinite number of gears), and that **therefore there must exist a First Uncaused Cause of being**.
- **There can be no intermediate causes of being at all, that any finite substance is sustained in existence immediately by the Ground of Being.**

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- No infinite chain of dependent causes
 - Can't have an infinite chain of things that all depend on something else for existence.
 - Why? The Infinite regress problem
 - Because:
 - If everything is just passing along existence (like gears in a watch),
 - But nothing actually originates it,
 - Then nothing would exist at all.
 - So there must be: L A first cause of existence that doesn't depend on anything else

- Not composed of essence and existence and, hence, requires no sustaining cause.
- Existence is not a property but an act, the instantiating of an essence. Therefore, it is not the case (can't be said) that this being's essence includes existence as one of its properties.
- Therefore, we must conclude that this being's essence just is existence.
- This being (in a sense) has no essence; rather it is the pure act of being, unconstrained by any essence.
- It is, (*ipsum esse subsistens*), the act of being itself subsisting. Aquinas identifies this being with the God whose name was revealed to Moses as "I AM" (Exodus 3:15).

Aquinas' cosmological argument

- It is based on the impossibility of an infinite regress of simultaneously operating causes.
- It seeks a First cause, not in the temporal sense, but in the sense of rank or source.

Aquinas' cosmological argument

- Proof of an Unmoved Mover based on motion.
- Observation: In the world, things are in motion.
- But anything that is in motion is being moved by something else.
- A thing that has potential to move cannot actualize its own potential; some other thing must cause it to move.
- But this other thing is also moved by something else, and that is being moved by something else, and so on.
- This series of things being moved cannot go on to infinity.
- In such a series, the immediate causes have no power of their own but are mere instruments of a first cause.



Aquinas' cosmological argument

- Aquinas is thinking here of causes that all act simultaneously like the gears of a machine, not successively like falling dominoes.
- If you take away the First cause, all you are left with is powerless instrumental causes.
- It does not matter, if you have an infinity of such causes; they still could not cause anything. (e.g. watch could not run without a spring, even if it had infinite number of gears, a train could not move without an engine even if it had an infinite number of box cars.)
- Conclusion: **There must be a first cause of motion in every causal series.**

- **Second way:** Attempts to prove the existence of a First Cause of existence based on causation in the world.
- Causes are ordered in a series (A causes B, B – C and so on)
- Nothing can be self caused. Why? Because it would have to bestow itself existence, which is impossible.
- Everything that is caused is caused by something else.
- The existence of any object depends on a whole array of contemporary causes, which in turn depends on other causes and so forth.
- Such a causal series cannot go on for infinity.
- Therefore, there must be a First cause of the existence of everything else, which is simply uncaused, this is God.

- Third way: An Absolute Necessary Being - based on the existence of contingent beings.
- Observation: We see in the world beings whose existence is not necessary but only possible. (These beings do not have to exist, for we see them come to be and pass away)
- If they were necessary, they would always exist.
- All beings cannot be contingent beings, for if everything were merely contingent, then at some point in time everything would cease to exist.
- Aquinas here presupposes the past eternity of the world (if the universe were eternal) then all possibilities would be realized.
- Hence, if every being, including matter itself were only a contingent being, then it is possible that nothing would exist.
- Given infinite past time, this possibility would be realized and nothing would exist.
- But then nothing would now exist, because out of nothing, nothing comes.
- Since this is absurd, not all beings must be contingent beings. (Some being or beings must be necessary.)

Leibniz's argument

- German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz sought to develop a version of the cosmological argument from contingency.
- “First question which should rightly be asked is this: **why is there something rather than nothing?**”
- Meant this question to be truly universal not merely to apply to finite things. There must be an answer to this question. Why? Because *“nothing happens without a sufficient reason.”*

- **Principle of Sufficient Reason:**

- Every existent thing, must have a sufficient reason or explanation for its existence.
- He rejects the explanation that the universe just exists with no reason, it is just a brute fact. There must be an explanation why it exists.
- Sufficient reason cannot be found in any single (individual) thing in the universe, for each individual thing is contingent itself and does not have to exist. Nor in a collection (aggregate) of such things which comprise the universe, for the universe is just the collection of these contingent things/beings and is therefore, itself contingent.

- Nor can the reason for the universe's existence be found in the earlier states of the universe, for these past states do not explain why there are any such states, any universe, at all.
- Imagine that a series of geometry books has been copied from eternity; such an infinite regress would still not explain why such books exist at all.
- Same true with regard to past states of the universe: even should these be infinite; we have yet to discover a sufficient reason for the existence of an eternal universe.
- Therefore, the reason for the universe's existence must be found outside the universe, in a being whose sufficient reason is self-contained; it is its own sufficient reason for existing and is the reason the universe exists as well.

Leibniz's argument

1. Every existing thing has an explanation of its existence, either in the necessity of its own existence or in an external cause.
2. If the universe has an explanation of its existence, that explanation is God.
3. The universe is an existing thing.
4. Therefore, the explanation of the universe's existence is God.

- Premise 1: merely requires any existing thing to have an explanation of its existence, either in the necessity of its own nature or in some external cause.
- This principle more plausible than its contradictory (that is all that is required for a successful argument) – every existing thing does not have explanation of its existence, either in the necessity of its own nature or in an external cause.

- Two kinds of beings: necessary beings (exists of its own nature) who have no external cause.
- Contingent beings: Their existence is accounted for by causal factors outside themselves. E.g. physical objects

- If the universe has an explanation of its existence, that explanation is God.
- This is the contrapositive of the typical atheist response that the universe simply exists as a brute contingent thing. (Atheist asserts that there being no God, it is false that everything has an explanation for its existence, the universe, in this case just exists inexplicably.)
- In saying so, the atheist implicitly recognizes that if the universe had an explanation, then God exists as its explanatory ground Why? The universe, by definition, includes all of physical reality. It is hard to see how it could have an explanation or at least a better one, other than it being caused by God.

- Premise 3: The universe is an existing thing.
- This is obvious.
- It follows that God exists.

1. Every being is either dependent or self—explaining
2. Not every being can be dependent
3. Therefore, at least one self-explaining being exists (a being which in turn explains the existence of the dependent beings)

- Every being is either dependent or self—explaining.
 - **Dependent beings we are aware of depend for their existence on other dependent beings.**
 - **The chain of dependent beings either comes to an end or it does not.**
 - **A self explaining being is required in either case.**
 - **The chain of dependent being has to comes to an end — The infinite regress problem. (e.g. Train)**

Kalam Cosmological Argument

- Kalam cosmological argument derives its name from the Arabic word designating medieval Islamic scholasticism. (the intellectual movement largely responsible for developing the argument.)
- It aims to show that **the universe had a beginning at some point in the finite past** and, since **something cannot come out of nothing**, it must **therefore, have a transcendent cause, which brought the universe into being.**
- Classical proponents of the argument sought to demonstrate that the universe began to exist on the basis of philosophical arguments against the existence of an infinite, temporal regress of past events.

- Today, the controlling paradigm of cosmology is the standard Big Bang model.
- The space time universe originated ex nihilo about 15 billion years ago.
- An origin ex nihilo seems to cry out for a transcendent cause.

Kalam Cosmological Argument

- Everything that begins to exist has a cause
- The universe began to exist
- Therefore, the universe has a cause
- That cause is timeless, supremely powerful, immaterial personal being.

Everything that begins to exist has a cause

- Seems obviously true—at least more than its negation
- **Metaphysical intuition—something cannot come into being/existence from nothing.**
- This premise is **constantly confirmed in our experience.**

The universe began to exist

- **Philosophical evidence**

- The impossibility of an actually infinite number of things

- Absurdities: Hilbert's hotel
- A beginningless series of events in time entails an actual infinite.
- If the universe is beginningless then prior to the present event there have existed an actually infinite number of previous events.
- A beginningless series of events in time entails an actually infinite number of things
- Therefore, a beginningless series of events in time cannot exist.

- The impossibility of forming an actual infinite collection of things by successive addition
 - The series of events in time is a collection formed by adding one member after another (obvious. The past did not come into existence whole and entire but was formed sequentially)
 - A collection formed by adding one member after another cannot be an actual infinite. (e.g trying to count to infinity or counting down from infinity)
 - Therefore, the series of events in time cannot be an actual infinite.

The universe began to exist

- Scientific evidence
- Expansion of the universe (Standard Big bang cosmology)
- Einstein's General Theory of Relativity
- Hubble's discovery

Cause

- Timeless
- Supremely powerful
- Immaterial
- Personal

Teleological Argument

- The fine-tuning of the universe is due to either:
 - physical necessity,
 - chance,
 - or design.
- It is not due to physical necessity or chance.
- Therefore, it is due to design.

What is fine tuning?

- Fine-tuning refers to the fact that the fundamental constants and quantities of nature appear to lie within an extraordinarily narrow range that permits the existence of intelligent life.
- E.g.
- The strength of gravity.
- The strength of the electromagnetic force.
- The cosmological constant.
- The initial conditions of the universe.

- (1) Gravitational force constant (2) Electromagnetic force constant (3) Strong nuclear force constant (4) Weak nuclear force constant (5) Cosmological constant
- (1) *Gravitational constant G* (*Gravitational force*: large scale attractive force, holds people on planets, and holds planets, stars, and galaxies together)—too weak, and planets and stars cannot form; too strong, and stars burn up too quickly. $F = G m_1 m_2 / r^2$
- (2) *Fine structure constant* (Electromagnetic force: small scale attractive and repulsive force, holds atoms electrons and atomic nuclei together)—If it were much stronger or weaker, we wouldn't have stable chemical bonds— likely preventing the kind of chemistry required for life as we know it.
- (3) *Strong coupling constant/parameter* (Strong nuclear force: small-scale attractive force, holds nuclei of atoms together, which otherwise repulse each other because of the electromagnetic force)—if it were weaker, the universe would have far fewer stable chemical elements, eliminating several that are essential to life.
- (4) *Weak coupling constant* (*Weak nuclear force*: governs radioactive decay)—if it were much stronger or weaker, life-essential stars could not form.
- (5) *Cosmological constant* (which controls the expansion speed of the universe) refers to the balance of the attractive force of gravity with a hypothesized repulsive force of space observable only at very large size scales. It must be very close to zero, that is, these two forces must be nearly perfectly balanced. To get the right balance, the cosmological constant must be fine-tuned to something like *1 part in 10^{120}* . If it were just slightly more positive, the universe would fly apart; slightly negative, and the universe would collapse.

Physical Necessity

- Physical necessity would mean that the constants and quantities could not have been different.
- There is no known law requiring these constants to have the precise values they possess.

Chance

- The odds of all the life-permitting conditions falling into place by chance are unimaginably small.
- Fine-tuning is patterned
- The values are not just random numbers—they form a coherent structure that allows:
 - stable matter
 - long-lived stars
 - chemistry
 - complexity
- When something is both:
 - highly improbable, and
 - conforms to an independently given pattern,
- We normally infer design.
- For example, if a firing squad of fifty expert marksmen all miss you, you would not conclude, "Well, somebody had to survive." You would suspect intentionality.

The fine-tuning argument

- The fine-tuning argument points to an intelligent cosmic designer possessing at least:
 - immense intelligence,
 - enormous power,
 - and the ability to order the universe toward life.

Argument from Beauty

Beauty: Objectively beautiful, not just subjectively preferred

Examples

- the night sky
- mathematical elegance
- symmetry in nature
- music and harmony
- moral beauty (acts of self-sacrifice)

Argument from beauty

- There are things in the world that are genuinely beautiful (not just “liked,” but objectively beautiful).
- This abundance of beauty is not necessary for survival or purely functional explanation. (surplus beauty not required for survival)
- The best explanation of the existence of objective beauty is God.
- Therefore, God exists.