

Philosophy of Religion

2. *The Cosmological Argument*

Can the Cosmological Argument (or any variant thereof) provide a convincing demonstration of the existence of God? If not, can anything of value be salvaged from it?

General Overviews

Rowe, William L., "Cosmological Arguments", in Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (eds), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion* (Blackwell, 1999), pp. 331-7.

Reichenbach, Bruce, "Cosmological Argument", in the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmological-argument/>.

(This usefully discusses the views of William Lane Craig, perhaps the best-known recent proponent of the argument, an evangelical philosopher who recently did a trip of British campuses giving high-profile debates against atheists! He wrote an entire book on the history of the argument, called *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz*, Macmillan, 1980, if you're interested.)

Classic Sources

Aquinas, Thomas, "The Five Ways", from *Summa Theologiae*, reprinted in many collections.

Leibniz, G. W. F., "On the Ultimate Origin of Things" (1697), reprinted in many collections.

Hume, David, *Treatise of Human Nature* I iii 3 "Why a Cause is Always Necessary"; *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* Section IV Part i; *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Part ix.
(Note that the argument attacked in the *Dialogues* is most like Samuel Clarke's version of the Cosmological Argument, though the points generally carry over to other versions also. For more on Hume's discussion, see John Gaskin, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*, chapter 4.)

Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A592 to 630.

(Kant famously argues that the Cosmological Argument depends on the Ontological Argument – this isn't really main line, but if you want to see some discussion of Kant's claim, there is a short article by Everett J. Nelson in *Philosophical Review* 1935 at:

<http://www.jstor.org/view/00318108/di981090/98p06921/0>

and a longer discussion by Donald P. Smith in the *European Journal* 2003, arguing on the other side but giving plenty of other more recent references, at:

[http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1111/1468-0378.00183/enhancedabs/.](http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1111/1468-0378.00183/enhancedabs/))

Other Important Discussions

Mackie, J. L., *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford, 1982), chapter 5.

(This is a "must read" piece.)

Swinburne, Richard, *The Existence of God* (Oxford, 1979), chapter 7. (Swinburne has a distinctive view of the Argument, seeing it less as a deductive proof of a first divine cause, than a suggestive pointer to the advantages of ultimate "personal" explanation. It would be good to read his chapter, but you can probably get the gist well enough from Mackie ...)