

Philosopher's argument from contingency

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The Argument from Contingency in the world of Philosophy falls from asking the question "is the Universe Contingent?" But how can we say that the universe does appear to be contingent?

In layman's term, contingent means when a particular thing exists for the basic reason of chance and possibilities. Some things are created and formulated by people for the necessity's sake. It can or can not exist.

However in philosophy, contingent things are being categorized exclusively from the creation of people, planet, galaxy and the universe as a whole where humans can not possibly create them. Contingent things are caused to exist by something or someone else. Something must have produced them. The argument from contingency is used by some philosophers as an attempt to discuss and prove the existence of God.

In philosophy, the argument of contingency is correlated to the existence of God and whether the existence of the universe is caused by God. There are three premises in this argument.

First premise says that everything exists has an explanation of its existence either in the necessity of its own nature or in an external cause. Relating to the first premise, the universe then has an explanation of its existence and that reason is God. Therefore the explanation of the universe's existence is God which means God exists (William 2007).

Philosophy also started from the journey of seeking whether the existence of the Universe had a beginning or a caused. In Aquinas attempt to explain the existence of God, he formulated the Quinque viae or five proofs for the existence of God.

The basic premise of these five arguments is that something caused the universe to exist. One of the arguments created that will be discussed on this paper is the argument from contingency. In this argument, it simply says that the world must have a beginning and God is the first cause so He therefore exists. Ordinary people who have weak foundation and curiosity when it comes to faith may just easily believe in this kind of conclusion.

However thinkers and believers will definitely see flaws from this argument which allotted some philosophers to discuss and dig deeper the concept of this argument. In the end, it was concluded by some philosophers that the argument from contingency is invalid proof for God's existence.

To better understand the Argument from Contingency of Aquinas, it is important to critically discuss it. Aquinas observed that in nature there are things whose existence is contingent, it can or can not exist. Since it is possible for such things not to exist, there must be some time at which such things did not in fact exist.

Thus, on probabilistic grounds, there must have been a time when nothing existed. If that is so, there would exist nothing that could bring anything into existence. Thus contingent beings are insufficient to account for the existence of contingent beings, meaning there must exist a Necessary Being for which it is impossible not to exist, and from which the existence of all contingent beings is derived (Argument from Contingency").

In general, the first cause in this argument should not require a cause since the chain of cause and effects can not be of infinite length. Therefore, there must be a cause which is God that doesn't necessarily have to be an effect.

Hume treatment on the argument from the contingency is reflected on his "Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion, Part IX" through the dialogue of Demea and Cleanthes. Hume contended that when we speak of cause we mean an explanation for an event. If that is so, surely at best it remains an assumption that every event must have a cause; for no one has ever provided explanations for every event that has occurred (Tobin 2000).

Hume claimed that even if it can be proved that a necessary being existed, it still fell short of showing that God as traditionally conceived and described existed. All it shows is that there is a necessary being of some sort. Why, Hume asked, couldn't the universe itself be the necessary being that the argument seeks to demonstrate? ("An Argument for the Contingency of the Universe").

The idea of Kant about the caused or the existence of God can be explored too. Kant pointed out that the principle of there being a cause for every event applies, especially the existence of the universe, is only known to us through the world of our sense experience. People are not even sure whether the rational way of humans' thinking actually has reached the origins of causes and explanations. What we assume to be the first cause may just as well be due to our ignorance of the cause and explanation for it (Tobin 2000).

In other words, even great thinkers can not be sure whether their sense of experience and reason already reach the idea of the caused. For Kant and Hume, the argument from Contingency is obviously invalid to prove the existence of God.

Philosopher Samuel Clarke also had a version related to argument from Contingency of Aquinas. There are three premises in Samuel Clarke's version of the cosmological argument.

Clarke states that every being that exists or ever did exist is either a dependent being or a self-existent being. Like the argument from contingency, Clarke also believes that not every being can be a dependent being. Therefore, there must exist a self-existent being that may or may not have a cause. God exists according to Clarke but He exists as an independent being that has no cause.

F. C. Copleston and Bertrand Russell's debate on the existence of a 'cause' is one of the most famous and substantial arguments from contingency in the contemporary world.

Their debate about God's existence in 1948 is the most enduring version and analysis about the existence of God. Copleston argues on behalf of the existence of God by reviewing and reweaving Aquinas' argument of contingency.

Russell on the other hand gave three principal objections to the argument of contingency namely: the unreality of modality, the unreality of causation and the unreality of the world as a totality (Koons, 2000).

F. C. Copleston starts out by saying that all beings and circumstances are contingent. These contingent beings must have a beginning and this beginning exists and is necessary for the existence of all other contingent beings. Copleston says, "Something does exist; therefore, there must be

something which accounts for this fact, a being which is outside the series of contingent beings.”

It means that contingent beings do not have a reason to exist without some beginning. This leads to the concept of God being there who exist for the universe's existence. In the debate, he also says that He is His own sufficient reason; and he is not a cause for Himself.

Only contingent beings needs a cause but God as not contingent doesn't need a cause. Copleston also concluded that the existence of God is the only rational explanation to the people's moral order of thinking. Thus, a person who loves goodness and who acknowledges moral rightness loves and acknowledges God (“ A Debate on the Argument from Contingency 1948”).

Bertrand Russell on the other hand, opposes Copleston on his view of the existence of God. He states that he does not agree with the suggestion of the word contingent and said it is a useless word unless it will be deeply analyzed.

So the concept of a necessary being is even more senseless to him. He also does not think that the word universe has any in depth meaning of its own. Russell's strongly claims that there is no overall cause for the things of this world just like the whole human race cannot have one mother.

Russell's overall claim as oppose to the argument from contingency is that “ there is no overall cause for the things of this world. He claims that there is no overall reason or cause for the existence of the universe. The world exists in its own sake and its just there and no particular meaning or purpose of its own. In answering Copleston idea of moral code imposed to human beings,

Russell said that the human judgment of right and wrong is just brought about by experience.

Classic and contemporary philosophers gave different point of views on the Aquinas's argument from contingency but until now despite the liberation of thoughts, no great thinker can fully prove the existence of God.

One, either believer or non believer, will always ask the question if God exists where did God came from. This is the Kant's idea that something beyond the universe can not be fully grasp by any kind of human thinking. As long as God does not revealed Himself personally and literally in this world, there will always be agnostic and sceptics about His existence.

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