

# The modal cosmological argument

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THE REASONABLENESS OF ACCEPTING OR REJECTING THE MODAL COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT: In this essay I shall explain why it is reasonable to accept "The Modal Cosmological Argument" as a rational explanation for the existence of God. The modal cosmological argument makes use of "modal" elements such as possibility, necessary existence and contingent existence to prove that a necessary being - namely God - exists. It also applies to the entire cosmos and all possible cosmoi and therefore deemed to be "cosmological".

Medieval theologians and philosophers of different religious views have developed the MCA over time. Examples include; the Christian Thomas Aquinas, the Islamic Al Kindi Ibn Sina and the Jewish Moses Mainmonides. \* The argument begins with the notion that every existing being or being which existed can either be a contingent being (something that depends on something other than itself for its existence) or self-existent. The second premise argues that if every being were dependent one would find that no being at all would ever exist or even come into existence.

However, it is clear that some being does in fact exist even if it is only myself and therefore there MUST be at least one being who is independent, necessary and self-existing. \* It is this being that we take to be God. This denial of universal dependency stated in the second premise is known as the "Cosmological Insight". The logic behind the cosmological insight can be illustrated using a simple analogy involving train coaches. A coach by nature relies on something else in order to move.

If there was a system in which there were only train coaches present, one would find that there would be no motion. It would not matter whether there are an infinite series of coaches attached to one another or if they formed a complex loop. In order to introduce motion, one needs to add something radically different to the system which moves of its own accord. In this case it would be a locomotive. The same logic can be applied to the theory of existence. Contingent beings are unable to "generate" their own existence and require some sort of force to do this for them- a necessary being or

God. \* There are a number of possible alternatives to the Cosmological Insight that can be argued. However one finds that all these different notions result in inexplicable brute facts which are defined as facts that have "no explanation". \* If all beings are contingent then a set of them would have had to at some stage simply "pop" \* into existence causing all the other beings in the cosmos. This idea results in complete and utter mystery as there isn't anything to explain how the first few contingent beings came about.

Before they apparently "popped into existence"\*, there would have to have been a state of absolute metaphysical nothingness which raises the question as to how these beings appeared, since there would have been no resources available to them. One could choose to argue that perhaps contingent beings never had to "pop into existence" but instead have always simply been. At first this notion appears logical yet upon closer examination one finds it too leads to another brute fact as there is nothing to explain why these beings existed when they need not have done so in the first place.

The same reasoning applies to the presence of an infinite series in which every contingent being was caused to exist by another. One could claim that if all contingent beings within this series has a cause and explanation in terms of its existence, then it isn't necessary for the entire series to also have a cause and explanation- there is no further explanation required and therefore no mystery involved. But the catch here is that one still can't explain why the infinite series exists when it need not have and so another brute fact arises.

Another reason why this alternative is unsuitable is the fact that an infinite series may not even be possible. William Lane Craig demonstrates this idea using the example of " Hilbert's Hotel". \* We are asked to imagine that this particular hotel has an infinite number of rooms and that all these rooms are full. \* When a new guest arrives requesting a room the hotel should in theory, be able to accommodate him by shifting each current guest next door until room no. 1 is vacant. \* However we are reminded that before this new guest arrived, all the rooms were full thus showing that it isn't possible for an infinite series to exist. \* All these contingency only options result in brute fact. One could argue that there is actually nothing wrong with accepting this and that a brute fact shouldn't be considered a weakness in the theories stated above. My response to this would be that unexplainable facts violate Principle of Sufficient Reason and are therefore are unacceptable.

The Principle of Sufficient Reason claims that anything that happens does so for a specific purpose. In other words, there is an explanation as to why things are the way things are, as opposed to some other way they might have been. PSR therefore serves to support the Modal Cosmological

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Argument by making brute facts seem insufficient and inconclusive through use of the cosmological insight. It is important to note that accepting the existence of God is not the same as accepting a brute fact because God is the only possible reason as to why there is a contingent order.

In order to violate PSR there would have to be another option other than God's existence that is true and this is not the case. The Big Bang theory, the idea that the universe amounted from nothing and the notion that the universe has simply always existed all fail to explain why contingent beings exist. Therefore the presence of a necessary being is the only feasible option. In "Why I am not a Christian" Bertrand Russell claims that the Modal Cosmological argument is unreasonable as it doesn't account for where God himself comes from, "If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause". Similarly Richard Dawkins argues that the cosmological argument makes the "entirely unwarranted assumption" that God himself is "immune to regress". \* However it is these objections that are unwarranted simply because God is not in the same explanatory predicament as dependent beings. He is a necessary and radically different being who halts infinite regress of explanation ex hypothesi. Thus the MCA still stands. Upon review of the modal cosmological argument one can see that the conclusion of argument is logical and follows from the premises in a understandable manner.

Intuitively the premises themselves can be said to be reasonable. The crux of the matter is the fact that the MCA depends on accepting the Principle of Sufficient Reason and thus if one refuses to do so, the entire argument collapses. In my opinion, it is rational to accept PSR because it is precisely <https://assignbuster.com/the-modal-cosmological-argument/>

what causes us to keep searching for explanations behind contingent facts until we find sufficient reason to doubt that there is an explanation. Decartes stated, " I think, therefore I am. \* and it seems to me, that it is simply human nature to question the reasons behind the way things are. If we didn't accept PSR life would be filled with unbearable uncertainty and one would find that science and philosophy itself would cease to exist because there would be no motivation whatsoever to broaden our understanding of how things work, their purposes and what causes them. The human race would be far less advanced in terms of knowledge and awareness. Therefore it is undoubtedly more reasonable to accept the modal cosmological argument than it would be to deny it. "