

Study guide

Craig, William L. *The Cosmological Argument From Plato to Leibniz*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001, ix-xi. The preface to Craig's book gives an overview of a classical argument for the existence of god.

1. A cosmological argument is an *a posteriori* argument for a cause or reason for the cosmos.
 - 1.1. an *a posteriori* argument is an argument based on observation or empirical evidence. An *a priori* argument is one that is based on a principle that is independent of experience or observation.
 - 1.2. There are different forms of the cosmological argument. Some forms appeal to a *cause* of the cosmos, others appeal to a *reason* for the cosmos.
 - 1.3. A *cause* is something from which another thing follows necessarily. For example, heating air causes it to rise; striking a match causes it to burn. A *reason* is more like a justification or an explanation of why something happened: the reason that I made dinner is that I was hungry; the reason that I voted was that I wanted to impact the election.
 - 1.4. A cause is sometimes used in a *temporal* sense. For example, the Kalam cosmological argument (based on Islamic thinkers) states that each event is preceded in time by a previous event. Since an actual infinity of time is impossible, the universe must have had a beginning, and therefore it required a first temporal cause.
 - 1.5. A cause is sometimes used in a *ranking* (or hierarchical) sense. For example, Aristotle, believed that the universe was past eternal (it had no beginning). He argued that the celestial spheres that make up the cosmos are driven by a prime mover, which is the first cause, from which all the spheres derive their movement. All the spheres move *simultaneously*, so the primer mover is not a temporal first cause, but a first cause in *rank* or *importance*. Aristotle sought a (first) cause for the motion and the order of the cosmos.
2. The cosmological argument is non-sectarian. It has advocates that are, pagan, Islamic, Jewish, Christian.
3. The cosmological argument is an argument that requires philosophical sophistication and patience.