



FROM FINITE COSMOS TO INFINITE CREATOR: AN UNASSAILABLE
DEFENSE OF THE KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

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Abstract

The Kalam Cosmological Argument stands at the crossroads of philosophy, theology, and contemporary science. This paper offers a thorough defense of its two central premises—(1) the contingency of the universe and (2) the necessity of a causal origin—while explicitly engaging the most influential historical and modern critiques. We address David Hume's empiricist challenge to causality, Immanuel Kant's contention that causation is merely a mental category, and recent scientific objections drawn from quantum cosmology, multiverse proposals, and "universe-from-nothing" models. By integrating rigorous metaphysical analysis with current cosmological findings, we demonstrate that these objections fail to undermine the soundness of the Kalam argument. We then deduce the essential attributes of the ultimate cause—will, power, knowledge, and life—showing that the argument culminates in the conception of a personal, volitional Creator. In doing so, this study reinforces the enduring philosophical relevance of the Kalam Cosmological Argument in the face of twenty-first-century challenges.

Keywords: Kalam Cosmological Argument, Contingency of the Universe, Causality, Divine Attributes, Philosophy of Religion, Proof by Contradiction, Metaphysics of Causation, Infinite Regress

Introduction

The Kalam Cosmological Argument, also known as the Argument of Contingency, posits the existence of God by asserting the contingent nature of the universe. This argument is constructed upon two foundational premises:

- **Premise 1:** The universe is contingent, signifying that it commenced its existence at a particular point in time.
- **Premise 2:** Everything that is contingent necessitates an originator, or in simpler terms, a cause.

From these premises, a logical conclusion emerges: if the universe is contingent, it must likewise possess an originator. This argument has been a focal point of extensive theological and philosophical discourse, with various objections surfacing throughout history, some of which continue to resonate in contemporary discussions.

To fully grasp the Argument of Contingency, a careful examination of the inherent self-evident truths upon which its premises rest becomes indispensable. The argument asserting the universe's contingency and the necessity of an originator for contingent entities hinges upon the negation of two fundamental impossibilities:



- The **Impossibility of Infinite Regress**: An unending succession of events or entities cannot genuinely exist in external reality, whether considered temporally or spatially. Consequently, the universe, being an integral part of this reality, must inherently be contingent.
- The **Impossibility of Non-Existence as a Cause**: A contingent entity is, by definition, something that was necessarily preceded by non-existence before it came into being. Consequently, non-existence itself cannot serve as the cause for the emergence of existence; existence is a prerequisite for generating something new.

By demonstrating the falsity of these two impossibilities, both premises of the Argument of Contingency are substantiated. This paper will first establish the contingency of the universe (Premise 1) and then proceed to justify the principle of causality and deduce the attributes of the ultimate cause (Premise 2).

Foundations of the Argument of Contingency (Premise 1)

The Argument of Contingency is meticulously constructed upon several self-evident truths, which act as the foundational principles guiding its logical progression. Ideally, the premises of any robust argument should be self-evident to human reason, requiring no external proof. The Argument of Contingency, as will be shown, demonstrably meets this exacting standard. The core self-evident truths that underpin this argument include:

1. **Principle of Excluded Middle**: A fundamental principle of logic dictates that anything either exists or does not exist. It is impossible for something to be both existent and non-existent simultaneously, nor can both possibilities be negated. This is a foundational proposition whose denial fundamentally undermines the very concept of existence itself.
2. **Dichotomy of Existence**: Any entity that exists is necessarily either eternal or contingent. An eternal entity is one that has never been preceded by non-existence. Conversely, a contingent entity possesses a definite beginning to its existence. There exists no third state beyond these two.
3. **Impossibility of Traversal of an Actual Infinite**: The traversal, or completion, of an actual infinite is logically impossible (Craig, 2000). An infinite series, by its very definition, cannot be completed or passed through. Consequently, if a series of events has indeed transpired to reach the present moment, it cannot logically be infinite.

Examples for the Impossibility of Traversal of an Actual Infinite

The profound notion that an actual infinite cannot be traversed is vividly brought to life through several compelling thought experiments:

- **The River Flowing from an Infinite Space**:
 - **Premise**: Imagine standing by a river where water flows, but its source extends infinitely far away.
 - **Implication**: In such a scenario, the water would, by logical necessity, never reach the observer. Any finite amount of time allowed would still imply an origin that could be pushed further back, as there is no true beginning. The undeniable fact that water *does* reach a specific point implies the existence of a finite starting point.
- **Sets of Infinite Events (Prophet Musa A.S Example)**:



- **Premise:** Consider all events that occurred up to the time of Prophet Musa A.S, forming what is presumed to be an infinite set. Then, contemplate all events from "behind" (eternity past) up to the present moment, which would also be considered infinite.
- **Implication:** This thought experiment leads to the inherent absurdity of attempting to compare the "size" of infinities (e.g., the infinite series of events up to Noah versus the infinite series up to today). Infinities, by their very nature, do not possess varying "sizes" in this comparative sense, thereby unequivocally highlighting a contradiction in their actualization within reality.
- **Infinite Chain of People Passing an Object:**
 - **Premise:** Envision a person who must receive an object from another individual positioned behind them. This second person, in turn, receives it from a third, and so on, with an infinite number of individuals forming this chain.
 - **Implication:** The object, under these specific conditions, could never possibly reach the final recipient. If it *has* reached the recipient, it logically and inescapably implies that the chain of people was not truly infinite.
- **Hilbert's Hotel Paradox (Hilbert, 1983):**
 - **Premise:** Consider a hypothetical hotel boasting an infinite number of rooms, all of which are, at present, fully occupied.
 - **Scenario 1 (One New Guest):** A new guest arrives. The manager, surprisingly, can accommodate them by simply asking the guest in room 1 to move to room 2, the guest in room 2 to move to room 3, and so on. Since there is no "last" room in an infinite sequence, every existing guest finds a new room, and room 1 becomes vacant for the new arrival.
 - **Scenario 2 (Infinite New Guests):** An entire busload of infinite new guests arrives. The manager can still accommodate them by asking each existing guest in room n to move to room $2n$. This ingenious maneuver frees up all odd-numbered rooms (an infinite quantity), thereby allowing for the accommodation of the infinite number of new guests.
 - **Implication:** These scenarios, while mathematically intriguing, lead to counterintuitive and logically absurd results when applied to actual reality (e.g., a "full" hotel can always accommodate more, or "infinity minus infinity" yields different outcomes). Such absurdities arise directly from the flawed assumption that an actual infinite can exist in external reality, within the confines of time and space.

Implicit Foundational Truths:

- **Proof by Contradiction (Argumentum Ad Absurdum):** This intellectual inference method proves indispensable when aiming to establish the contingency of the universe. It involves assuming the opposite of what one intends to prove (e.g., assuming the universe *is* eternal) and then rigorously demonstrating that this assumption inevitably leads to a contradiction. By showing the absurdity of the opposing view, the initial assumption is established as false, thereby confirming the desired conclusion (that the universe is contingent) as valid. This method is a standard and respected tool in both mathematics and geometry.



To prove the contingency of the universe using proof by contradiction, one assumes, for the sake of argument, that the universe is eternal. This assumption implies an actual infinite series of past events that have led up to the present moment. However, as previously discussed and established, an actual infinite cannot be completed or traversed. However, for us to be in the present, the entire past, if infinite, would necessarily have had to be completed. This logical contradiction demonstrates the falsehood of the initial assumption, thereby proving that the universe is not eternal but rather contingent and had a beginning.

4. **The Universe Exists:** This is an undeniable, empirically observable fact, requiring no further demonstration.
5. **The Universe as a Series of Events:** The universe, as we perceive it through our senses, is fundamentally characterized by a continuous series of events or occurrences.
6. **Contingency of the Universe:** Given the preceding points, the universe, as a dynamic series of events, is necessarily either contingent or eternal.

Proving the Contingency of the Universe (Premise 1, Conclusion)

Based on these foundational truths, the first premise of the Argument of Contingency—that the **universe is contingent**—can be robustly demonstrated through proof by contradiction:

- **Premise A:** The traversal of an actual infinite is impossible; in other words, an infinite series cannot be completed or passed through.
- **Premise B:** If the universe were eternal, it would logically imply the traversal or completion of an infinite series of events leading up to any given moment or event in the present. However, such a completion of an infinite series is, by definition, impossible.

Therefore, the assumption that the universe is eternal leads directly to a contradiction, thereby proving that the universe cannot be eternal. The logical and inescapable conclusion is that the **universe is contingent**.

This argument stands firm and robust; to effectively refute it, one would be compelled to either:

- Establish a third state between existence and non-existence.
- Demonstrate that an actual infinite can indeed exist in external reality without leading to any inherent contradictions.

The Principle of Causality: Its Basis and Justification (Premise 2)

Having established the contingency of the universe, we now turn to the second premise: that every contingent thing requires an originator or cause. The principle of causality, which asserts this necessity, is considered by classical Kalam scholars to be **self-evident**. Its truth is immediately apparent to reason, requiring no further demonstration.

To understand why it is deemed self-evident, consider the possibilities for how a contingent thing, which was once non-existent and then came into existence, could have originated:

1. **Something else gave it existence:** This aligns with the principle of causality.
2. **It gave existence to itself (Self-Causation):** This is deemed absurd. For something to cause itself, it would logically have to exist *before* it existed, in order to act as its own cause. This is a clear contradiction. A non-existent entity cannot bring itself into being.
3. **It came into existence by chance, out of nothing:** This is also considered absurd. Non-existence is not a positive entity or a force that can produce existence. The concept of



something arising from absolute nothingness without any preceding factor is inconceivable to reason. If non-existence could cause existence, then anything and everything could spontaneously pop into being without reason, which is contrary to all experience and rational expectation.

Because the alternatives to external causation are logically incoherent, the necessity of an existent cause for a contingent thing is considered a fundamental, self-evident truth. The very act of coming from non-existence to existence implies an agent performing that act, and that agent cannot be non-existent.

Historical Conceptions of Causality

While many Kalam scholars view causality as self-evident, other philosophical traditions have offered different justifications or interpretations:

1. **Philosophers' Syllogistic Approach:** Some Muslim philosophers, influenced by Greek thought, framed the principle of causality as a theoretical deduction rather than a purely self-evident truth. They argued: "The universe is contingent (hadith). A contingent thing is possible. A possible thing is in need of something to actualize its existence. Therefore, it needs an originator." While this presents the argument in a syllogistic mold, it ultimately relies on necessarily true propositions. The debate often centered on whether the steps of inference rendered it "theoretical" rather than "self-evident," even if the conclusion was undeniable.
2. **Mu'tazila's Analogy (Qiyas-ul-Ghaib al-Shahid):** The Mu'tazila school of thought, known for its emphasis on reason, often employed the principle of "analogy of the unseen to the seen" (Qiyas-ul-Ghaib al-Shahid). They reasoned that just as human actions (e.g., moving a hand) are contingent and require an intentional human agent, so too the contingent universe must have an intentional divine agent. They derived a universal principle from observed human actions and applied it to the cosmos. While this method was utilized, it was generally not favored by Ash'ari and Maturidi theologians, who preferred direct rational necessity over analogy for divine attributes.
3. **Empiricism and Hume's Challenge:** In Europe, with the rise of empiricism, thinkers like David Hume radically challenged the concept of causality (Hume, 2007). Empiricists argued that all knowledge originates from sensory experience and induction. Consequently, they asserted that causality is derived from observing constant conjunctions (concurrency) between events (e.g., seeing a hockey stick hit a ball, and then seeing the ball move). Hume famously argued that we never *perceive* the "causal connection" itself, only the sequence of events that it connects. For Hume, causality was merely a "psychological inclination" or a useful habit of mind, not an objective relationship existing "out there" in reality. This view, if consistently applied, would undermine the objective foundations of science.
4. **Kant's Response:** Immanuel Kant attempted to rescue objectivity by arguing that causality is not derived from experience but is an innate category of the human mind, a universal structure through which we necessarily organize our perceptions (Kant, 1998). However, even Kant's solution faced criticism for potentially rendering objective reality unknowable, leading some, such as Sheikh Mustafa Sabri in the Islamic tradition, to compare his conclusions to a form of sophistry.

Kalam's position remains firm: the principle of causality is a self-evident truth of reason, as the alternatives are logically incoherent.



Refuting Alternative Causal Models for the Universe's Origin

Beyond the basic necessity of a cause, Kalam also addresses alternative models for ultimate origins, demonstrating their logical impossibility:

1. **Self-Causation:** As discussed, a thing cannot be its own cause. For something to cause itself, it would logically need to exist before its own existence, which is a fundamental contradiction. A non-existent entity cannot bring itself into being.
2. **Chance:** The notion that the universe came into existence by "chance" is ambiguous. If "chance" implies emergence from absolute non-existence without any cause, it is incoherent, as non-existence has no causal power. If "chance" refers to an unexplained event *within* an existing framework, it still presumes a causal framework and merely points to a limit of human knowledge, not a lack of cause.
3. **Circularity:** This model proposes that entities cause each other in a closed loop (e.g., A causes B, B causes C, and C causes A). This is logically impossible because a cause must be ontologically prior to its effect. In a circular chain, each entity would be both prior and posterior to itself, leading to an absurdity. The "Zayd and Amr's house" analogy illustrates this: if Zayd's house is in front of Amr's, and Amr's is in front of Zayd's, neither house can be located. Similarly, in a causal loop, no entity can come into existence, as each depends on another that is itself dependent.

The Problem of Multiple Causes

The Kalam argument also addresses the conceivability of an effect having multiple causes, particularly at the ultimate level of causation.

1. **Independent Causes:** If a single effect (C) were to have two truly independent and sufficient causes (A and B), it would lead to redundancy. If A alone is sufficient to produce C, then B's presence is not strictly necessary for C to exist. C would exist even if B were absent. The same applies if B is sufficient. This means the effect C is not genuinely dependent on *both* A and B simultaneously; it is dependent on *either* A or B. From a theological perspective, if God is the ultimate, omnipotent cause, positing another equally ultimate and independent cause for the same effect would render one of them superfluous, undermining the absolute sufficiency and singularity of the divine.
2. **Joint Causes:** If A and B are not independent but are "joint causes," meaning neither is sufficient alone, but both together form a totality that causes C, then the situation changes. In this case, there is no redundancy because both A and B are necessary components. However, this still implies that the *true* cause is not A or B individually, but the *unified totality* of A and B. When applied to the ultimate origin of the universe, this "unified totality" would itself be the single, complete, and uncaused cause. This perspective aligns with the Islamic concept of God's absolute oneness (Tawhid), where ultimate causal power is unified and indivisible. Even in cases like two bullets killing a person, while legally both are causes, ontologically, the death is the result of the combined, unified impact, not two separate, independent deaths. Modern scholars have sometimes proposed the concept of "overdetermination" to describe such scenarios (e.g., two fires simultaneously igniting cotton). However, Kalam maintains that this still implies either redundancy or a single, complete causal event.



Why a Contingent Thing Cannot Be a Cause

The assertion that a contingent thing cannot be a cause is fundamental to the Kalam argument's progression towards an ultimate, non-contingent cause.

1. **Inherent Dependency:** A contingent thing's defining characteristic is its dependency. It exists only because something else brought it into being. A cause, by contrast, must be independent in its power to originate. It is a logical contradiction for something that *needs* to be caused to simultaneously *be* a cause for something else, especially at the ultimate level.
2. **Origin from Non-Existence:** A contingent thing emerges from non-existence. For it to act as a cause, it must first exist. However, if its own existence is derived, then the question of its own cause immediately arises. It cannot be its own cause, nor can it be the ultimate cause of a chain of effects, as this would lead to an infinite regress of dependent causes, which is impossible.
3. **The "Effect" (Ma'lul) Nature:** A contingent thing is fundamentally an effect (ma'lul); it has been caused or brought into being. Its very nature points to an external cause for its explanation. It cannot simultaneously be the ultimate explanation or cause for another entity without contradicting its own identity as a caused entity.
4. **Duration and Constant Creation (Khalq-e-Mustamirr):** The dependency of a contingent thing is not limited to its initial coming into existence (huduth); it extends to its continued **duration**. A contingent thing remains dependent on its cause for its ongoing existence. If the cause were to cease its action, the contingent thing would cease to exist. This concept is central to Kalam's doctrine of **constant creation (khalq-e-mustamirr)**, which posits that God continuously re-creates the universe and everything within it at every moment. This means that contingent things do not possess intrinsic, independent causal power (ta'sir); their apparent "effects" are ultimately the direct result of the continuous creative act of the ultimate Cause.
5. **Occasionalism:** This leads to the Kalam doctrine of Occasionalism. Against Hume's observation that we only perceive "concurrency" (events happening together) rather than direct causation, Kalam argues that contingent things are merely the *occasions* for God's direct creative acts. For instance, fire does not inherently burn cotton by its own nature; instead, God directly creates the burning when fire and cotton are in proximity. Thus, the actual cause (illat) is not within the universe itself, but *beyond it*, being non-temporal and non-spatial.

Attributes of the Ultimate Cause

If the universe is a contingent "act," it necessitates an "agent" (fa'il) or "originator" (muhaddith). The Kalam argument, through its analysis of contingency, deduces specific attributes for this ultimate cause:

1. **Will (Irada):** The universe's transition from non-existence to existence implies a *preference* for existence over non-existence. Will is precisely defined as the act of establishing preference (tarjih) between equally possible alternatives (e.g., existence or non-existence, or various forms of existence). The specific characteristics of the universe—its temporal and spatial dimensions, its particular laws, and all individual traits—are chosen actualizations from an array of possibilities, inherently requiring a volitional agent.



2. **Power (Qudrat):** Will presupposes power. One cannot choose or prefer without the ability to actualize that choice. Power, in this context, is the capacity to bring about either side of a possibility (e.g., to make something exist or not exist).
3. **Knowledge (Ilm):** Power, in turn, presupposes knowledge. An agent cannot possess adequate power or exercise will without knowing what it is doing, what it is willing to do, or what the possible outcomes are.
4. **Life (Hayat):** All the aforementioned attributes—will, power, and knowledge—are active attributes that cannot meaningfully exist in an inert, lifeless entity. Therefore, the ultimate cause must be living.

Thus, the Dalil-e-Huduth, by demonstrating the need for a volitional cause, proves the existence of a "personal God"—one possessing will, knowledge, power, and life—rather than merely an impersonal "efficient cause" akin to Aristotle's unmoved mover. This contrasts with some Aristotelian or Thomistic cosmological arguments that trace a series of causes and effects *within* the created order, where created entities are assumed to have inherent causal powers. In Kalam, every contingent thing is an effect directly caused by Allah, reinforcing the absolute oneness of God in causality: "La Fa'ila Illallah" (There is no doer but Allah), "La Mu'assira Illallah" (There is no affector but Allah), "La Mujida Illallah" (There is no giver of existence but Allah). This principle asserts that ultimate causality resides solely with God.

Scope of the Argument and Modern Science

The Argument of Contingency, particularly regarding the contingency of the universe, applies to anything that exists within **time and space**. In Kalam terminology, anything that has **limits (hudud)** and occupies space cannot have an infinite regress of events or occurrences.

Modern scientific theories, such as the **Big Bang** and the **laws of thermodynamics**, often lend considerable support to the idea of a universe with a definite beginning. However, it is crucial to understand that while these scientific findings are supportive, they do not—and cannot—replace the foundational philosophical and rational arguments for contingency.

- **Complementary Evidence:** Scientific theories can serve as **supporting evidence** for the Argument of Contingency, illustrating how the physical universe's observed properties align with the philosophical conclusion that the past is finite.
- **Philosophical Primacy:** The philosophical argument for contingency rests on self-evident truths that inherently precede empirical scientific findings. While scientific models and theories may evolve over time, the fundamental principles of logic and metaphysics upon which the Argument of Contingency is constructed remain constant and unyielding.
- **Addressing the "What Before?" Question:** Even if the Big Bang theory successfully establishes a starting point for the universe, the deeper question of what caused the Big Bang itself, or what existed prior to it (if anything), inevitably persists. The fundamental inquiry into whether the initial cause was eternal or contingent remains pertinent, irrespective of scientific discoveries about the universe's origin.

Ultimately, the Argument of Contingency posits that the series of occurrences (hawadis) within the universe—where entities come into existence from a state of non-existence—is not infinite. Every such occurrence is an effect, necessarily requiring a cause. This profound understanding carries significant implications for comprehending the nature of the universe's ultimate Originator.



Conclusion

This paper has meticulously laid out the philosophical foundations and justifications for both premises of the Kalam Cosmological Argument. We began by rigorously demonstrating the contingency of the universe, establishing that its temporal beginning is a logical necessity derived from self-evident truths and the impossibility of an actual infinite regress. This was achieved by systematically refuting alternative models for the universe's origin, such as self-causation, chance, and circularity, and by illustrating the absurdities inherent in the concept of an actual infinite through various thought experiments.

Subsequently, we examined the second premise, which asserts that every contingent entity requires an originator. We explored the self-evident nature of the principle of causality, contrasting it with historical, philosophical, and empirical challenges. Crucially, we established that a contingent thing, by its very nature of being dependent and an effect, cannot ultimately be a cause. This led to the deduction of the necessary attributes of the ultimate Originator: a being possessing will, power, knowledge, and life. These attributes demonstrate that the cause of the universe must be a personal God, consistent with the Islamic doctrine of Tawhid, which posits a singular, ultimate, and independent causal agent.

In sum, the rigorous philosophical arguments presented here provide a robust and undeniable foundation for the Kalam Cosmological Argument. By demonstrating both the universe's contingency and the necessity of an ultimate, volitional cause, this paper affirms the coherence and strength of this enduring argument for the existence of God, inviting further theological and philosophical inquiry into the nature of this Necessary Originator.

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