

**Clarke's Cosmological Argument.** From Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the being and Attributes of God* (1705)

First, then, it is absolutely and undeniably certain that something has existed from all eternity. This is so evident and undeniable a proposition, that no atheist in any age has ever presumed to assert the contrary, and therefore there is little need of being particular in the proof of it. For since something now is, it is evident that something always was, otherwise the things that now are must have been produced out of nothing, absolutely and without a cause, which is a plain contradiction in terms. For, to say a thing is produced and yet that there is no cause at all for that production, is to say that something is effected when it is effected by nothing, that is, at the same when it is not effected at all. Whatever exists has a cause, a reason, a ground of its existence, a foundation on which its existence relies, a ground or reason why it does exist rather than not exist, either in the necessity of its own nature (and then it must have been of itself eternal), or in the will of some other being (and then that other being must, at least in the order of nature and causality, have existed before it)...

There has existed *from eternity some one unchangeable and independent being*. For since something must needs have been from eternity, as has been already proved and is granted on all hands, either there has always existed some one unchangeable and *independent* being from which all other beings that are or ever were in the universe have received their original, or else there has been an infinite succession of changeable and *dependent* beings produced one from another in an endless progression without any original cause at all. Now this latter supposition is so very absurd that, though all atheism must in its accounts of most things (as shall be shown hereafter) terminate in it, yet I think very few atheists ever were so weak as openly and directly to defend it. For it is plainly impossible and contradictory to itself. I shall not argue against it from the supposed impossibility of infinite succession, *barely and absolutely considered in itself*, for a reason which shall be mentioned hereafter. But, if we consider such an infinite progression as *one* entire endless *series* of *dependent beings*, it is plain this whole *series* of beings can have no cause *from without* of its existence because in it are supposed to be included *all things* that are, or ever were, in the universe. And it is plain it can have no reason *within itself* for its existence because no one being in this infinite succession is supposed to be self-existent or *necessary* (which is the only ground or reason of existence of anything that can be imagined *within the thing itself*, as will presently more fully appear), but every one *dependent* on the foregoing. And where no *part* is necessary, it is manifest *the whole* cannot be necessary-- absolute necessity of existence not being an extrinsic, relative, and accidental denomination but an inward and essential property of the nature of the thing which so exists. An infinite succession, therefore, of merely *dependent* beings without any original independent cause is a *series* of beings that has neither necessity, nor cause, nor any reason or ground at all of its existence either *within itself* or *from without*. That is, it is an express contradiction and impossibility. It is a supposing *something* to be *caused* (because it is granted in every one of its stages of succession not to be necessarily and of itself), and yet that, in the whole, it is caused *absolutely by nothing*, which every man knows is a contradiction to imagine done *in time*; and because duration in this case makes no difference, it is equally a contradiction to suppose it done from eternity. And consequently there must, *on the contrary*, of necessity have existed from eternity *some one immutable and independent being*...