CHAPTER-III
ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

In this chapter I shall discuss the plausibility of two major arguments for the existence of God namely the ‘Ontological argument’ and the ‘Cosmological argument’.

Ontological Argument:

when we talk of ontological argument, we find that there are in fact a number of versions of ontological argument. But here, I shall discuss only two of them, the Cartesian version and the Anselmanian version as reformulated by Norman Malcolm. In the words of John Hick, “As an a priori argument, it (ontological argument) has the form of a logical demonstration; and as such it either totally succeeds or totally fails”1. It shall be my endeavour here to examine the plausibility of these arguments and see whether these arguments can lead us to the proof of the Existence of God.

The Cartesian Version

“... I find with in my self innumerable ideas of a kind of objects that, even if perhaps they have no existence anywhere outside me, cannot be called nonentities; my thinking of them is in a way arbitrary, but they are not figments of mine; they have their own genuine and unchangeable

1. Hick, J., Arguments for the existence of God,
natures. For example, when I imagine a triangle, it may be that no such figure exists anywhere outside my consciousness, or never has existed; but there certainly exists its determinate nature (its essence, its form), which is unchangeable and eternal. This is no figment of mine, and does not depend on my mind, as is clear from the following; various properties can be proved of this triangle, e.g. that its three angles are together equal to two right angles, that its greatest side subtends its greatest angle and so on; willy-nilly, I now clearly see them, even if I have not thought of them in any way when I have previously imagined a triangle; they cannot, then, be figments of mine.

... from my mere ability to elicit the idea of some object from my consciousness, that all the properties that I clearly and distinctly perceive the object to have, do really belong to it; could not this give rise to an argument by which the existence of God might be proved? I assuredly find in my self the idea of God - of a supremely perfect being - no less than the idea of a figure or a number; and I clearly and distinctively understand that ever lasting existence belongs to his nature, no less than I can see that what I prove of some figure, or number, belongs to the nature of that figure, or number. So, even if my meditations on previous days were not entirely true, yet I ought to hold the existence of God with at least the same degree of certainty as I have so far held mathematical truths.
At first sight, indeed, this is not quite clear; it bears a certain appearance of being a fallacy. For, since I am accustomed to the distinction of existence and essence in all other objects, I am readily convinced that the existence can be disjoined even from the divine essence, and that thus God can be conceived as non-existent. But on more careful consideration it becomes obvious that existence can no more be taken away from the divine essence than the magnitude of its three angles together can be taken away from the essence of a triangle; or than the idea of a valley can be taken away from the idea of a hill. So it is not less absurd to think of god (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is lacking a certain perfection), than to think of a hill without a valley.

'Perhaps I cannot think of god except as existing, just as I cannot think of a hill without a valley. But from my thinking of a hill with a valley, it does not follow that there is any hill in the world; similarly, it appears not to follow, from my thinking of God as existent, that God does exist. For my thought imposes no necessity on things; and just as I can imagine a winged horse, although no horse has wings, so, it may be, I can feign the conjunction of god and existence even though no God should exist'

There is a lurking fallacy here. What follows from my inability to think of a mountain apart from a valley is not that a mountain and a
valley exist somewhere, but only that mountain and valley, whether they exist or not, are mutually inseparable. But from my inability to think of God as non-existent, it follows that existence is inseparable from god and thus that he really does exist. It is not that my thought makes this so, or imposes any necessity on anything; on the contrary, the necessity of the fact itself, that is, of God’s existence, is what determines me to think this way. I am not free to think of god apart from existence (that is, of a supremely perfect being apart from the supreme perfection) in the way that I can freely imagine a horse either with or without wings.

Moreover, I must not say at this point: After supposing God to have all perfections, I must certainly suppose him to be existent, since existence is one among perfections; but the initial supposition was not necessary. In the same way, there is no necessity for me to think all quadrilaterals can be inscribed in a circle; but given that I do think so, I shall necessarily have to admit that rhombus can be inscribed in a circle; this, however, is obviously false. For indeed there is no necessity for me ever to happen upon any thought of God; but whenever I choose to think of the first and Supreme Being, and as it were bring out the idea of him from the treasury of my mind, I must necessarily ascribe to him all perfections, even if I do not at the moment enumerate them all, or attend to each. This necessity clearly ensures that, when later on I observe that existence is a perfection, I am justified in concluding that the First and Supreme Being exists. In the same way, it is not necessary
that I should ever imagine any triangle; but whenever I choose to consider a rectilinear figure that has just three angles; I must ascribe to it properties from which it is rightly inferred that its three angles are not greater that two right angles; even if I do not notice this at the time. When, on the other hand, I examine what figures can be inscribed in circles, it is in no way necessary for me to think all quadrilaterals belong to this class; indeed, I cannot even imagine this, so long as I will admit only what I clearly and distinctly understood. Thus there is a great difference between such false suppositions and my genuine innate ideas, among which the first and chief is the idea of God. In many ways, I can see that this idea is no fiction depending on my way of thinking, but an image of a real and immutable nature. First, I can frame no other concept of anything to whose essence existence belongs, except God alone; again, I cannot conceive of two or more such Gods; and given that one God exists, I clearly see that necessarily he has existed from all eternity, and will exist to all eternity; and I perceive many other divine attributes, which I can in no wise diminish or alter.

Whatever method of proof I use, it always comes back to this: I am not utterly convinced of anything but what I clearly and distinctly perceive. Of the things I thus perceive, some are obvious to anybody; other are discovered only those who undertake closer inspection and more careful investigation, but, when once discovered, are regarded as no less certain than the others. It is not so readily apparent that the
square on the base of a right - angled triangle is equal to the squares of the sides, as it is that the base subtends the greatest angle; but once it has been seen to be so, it is just as much believed. Now as regards God, assuredly there would be nothing that I perceived earlier or more readily, if it were not that I am overwhelmed by prejudices, and my consciousness beset in every direction by images of sensible objects. For what is intrinsically more obvious than that the Supreme being is; that God, to whose essence alone existence belongs, exists? And though it took careful consideration for me to see this, yet now I am as certain of it as I am of anything else that appears most certain; of it as I am of anything else that appears most certain; not only that, but I can further see that the certainty of everything else depends on this, so that apart from this no perfect knowledge ever possible...."2

With a careful study of the argument we can reach to the following premises and the conclusion :

(i) The idea of god is of a being possession every perfection

(ii) Existence is a perfection;

Therefore, the idea of god is of a being possessing existence, i.e. god cannot be thought of as not existing , i.e. God necessarily exists.

Taking this formulation, now I would like to see whether it

2. Stuart Brown: Proof and Existence of God, p.73-76
constitutes a proof of God's existence. In order to do that I shall put this formulation to the test as brought out in the previous chapter. In order for this argument to constitute a proof, it shall satisfy the two conditions - firstly, that the argument is valid and secondly, that the truth of the premises is an established fact.

The first premise is relatively unproblematic. The statement 'God has all perfections' is analytically and therefore a priori true. There may be some people who will countenance imperfection in their deities. But that is not the point. For the premise is true in virtue of that convention where by 'imperfect deity' is a contradiction in terms.

The second premise is much more troublesome. It raises very fundamental issues. For Decartes' thesis is that existence is as much a perfection in God as is omnipotence, being wholly good or being all-knowing. The implication is that the existence is an attribute of God just as omnipotence. In saying that 'God exists' we are as much ascribing a property or quality to God as we are if we say 'God is omnipotent'. And this gives rise to further question - is existence an attribute?

According to Kant, existence could not be contained in the concept of a thing and hence that an ontological proof of God's existence is impossible. To Kant's way of thinking what Decartes sought to show is that the claim 'God exists' is analytic, that is to say,
the predicate ‘exists’ is contained in the concept of the subject, viz. ‘God’. Kant distinguishes between the judgements which are ‘analytic’ and those which are ‘synthetic’. And he opposes the suggestion that ‘God exists’ is analytic with the assertion that “all existential propositions are synthetic”. So where as Decartes would have said that all existential propositions, with the sole exception of ‘God exists’, are ‘synthetic’, Kant will not grant even one exception. Decartes says that he ‘cannot conceive anything but God himself to whose essence existence necessarily pertains’. He thus maintains that there is one and only one existential proposition, namely, ‘God exists’ which is analytic. Kant’s thesis is that no existential propositions are analytic.

If Kant’s thesis is established (no existential proposition could be analytic), we should have a proof that there could be no ontological proof of the existence of anything.

But, Kant’s thesis is not all admitted. Malcolm suggests counter-examples to the claim that no existential proposition is analytic. I think, he is right in this point. The assertion ‘there is a prime number between 30 and 33’ is one whose truth, if it could be proved, would be proved from a priori premises. And it would be natural to expect that such a proof would be ontological and that the conclusion drawn from it would be analytic. Kant himself, however would not have conceded that these examples disproved his contention that there are no judgements
which were both analytic and existential. For he maintained that such
arithmetical judgements were 'synthetic', i.e. not analytic.

I shall not enter into Kant's reasons for maintaining that there
were synthetic a prior truths. I feel that Kant was at least over confident
in his assertion that no existential proposition is analytic. And, to the
extent that his case against the ontological argument depends upon it,
we may at least conclude that he did not establish that a proof of the
existence of a god by means of such an argument is impossible.

Malcolm says that, although it is not true that all existential
propositions are synthetic, there is none the less something right about
Kant's view when Kant says 'being' is not a real 'predicate'. Malcolm
agrees that it is at least intuitively absurd to regard existence as an
attribute. He tries to bring out the absurdity by showing that one would
be reduced to saying if one supposed it was. He gives as an example of
a king who invites two of his councilors, A and B, to draw up lists of
the sorts of quality they think a perfect Chancellor has. Their lists
turn out to be identical, except that A included in the list the word
'existence' which does not appear in B's list. Malcolm invites us to
recognise that no description is given in A's list which is not also given
in B's.
We can imagine the argument that might take place between A and B, if A were to maintain that his list was more complete than B’s.

‘Your list’, A may complain, ‘leaves out a quite vital quality - that of existence.’ ‘that is not a quality,’ B may report. ‘We are not interested in appointing non-existent candidates!’ A : ‘But that is my point. That is just why existence is such a vital quality. No candidate who didn’t exist would be worth considering.’ B: ‘now you are just playing with words. Someone did not exist wouldn’t be a candidate for chancellor. But he wouldn’t be a candidate for being a candidate ... my point is, he would not be a some one ... there wouldn’t even be a “he” to be or fail to be a someone. There would be nothing of which we could say either that it has or it lacks any quality. To say of something that it has or it lacks some quality you have to be able to refer to it and say “this has quality - “. But if you refer the something and say, “this exists” what you say is quite empty. Where as if you say of it “this does not exist” you contradict yourself.”

Here, what B’s reasoning points to is that existence is not a property of individuals. For, if it were, one could point out or otherwise refer to an individual and go on to say of it whether or not it had that property. But, of course, one can only point out or otherwise refer to existing individuals. So, existence cannot be a property an individual may or may not have. It can only be a property of existing individuals. But, this may cause confusion. In better words existence is a property of
classes (having at least one member) or of concepts or general terms (having something to which they can truly be applied). So, when we say, e.g. ‘God exists’, we are saying something about something. But, if we say, it has to be about the very thing we would be saying something about when we say ‘God does not exist’. That cannot be an individual. But it could be a class, concept, general term, or something of that sort.

In Russell’s predicate logic, the assertion that ‘x exists’ does not add further characteristic of existence to a subsisting x. Thus, when we say that ‘horses exist’, it is logically equivalent to ‘there are x’s such that x is a horse is sometime true. And, ‘Unicorns do not exist’ is logically equivalent to ‘there are not x’s such that ‘x is a unicorn is true’ And ‘God exists’ means that there is one (and only one) x such that ‘x is omnipotent, etc.’ is true. Thus in Russell's predicate logic, existential propositions are such that they cannot be true by definition and therefore, not a priori necessary.

The basic assumption of Descartes argument that ‘existence is a predicate’ is not an established truth. And, hence, the existence of God cannot be proved as necessary existence.

Not only, then, does Decartes not establish his premise that existence is a perfection but it seems that the premise is actually false. For it would only be true if existence were a property, attribute or whatever. And as we have seen that it is not a property of the sort it would have to be a perfection.
ever. And as we have seen that it is not a property of the sort it would have to be a perfection.

Anselm's Second Ontological Argument As Restated by Norman Malcolm:

"If God, a being greater than which cannot be conceived, does not exist, then he cannot come into existence. For if he did, he would either have been caused to come into existence or have happened to come into existence, and in either case he would be a limited being, which by our conception of him he is not. Since he cannot come into existence, if he does not exist, his existence is impossible. If he does exist, he cannot have come into existence (for the reasons given), nor can he cease to exist, for nothing could cause him to cease to exist nor could it just happen that he ceased to exist. So if God exists, his existence is necessary. Thus God's existence is either impossible or necessary. It can be the former only if the concept of such a being is self contradictory in some way or logically absurd. Assuming that it is not so, it follows that he necessarily exists."³

Malcolm's argument is based on the following assumptions:

(a) If there is God, his existence is ontologically necessary,
(b) If he does not exist, his existence is impossible,

³. Hick J (Ed).: The many faced Argument, p-309
Therefore, God’s existence is either impossible or necessary.

The first premise follows from the fact that five the concept of ontologically necessary being, it is logically necessary that if there is such a being his existence is necessary that he cannot cease to exist.

The second premise also follows from the same fact that if such a being does not exist, he cannot come into existence lest he will be a contingent being.

Hick says, that these logical impossibility and logical necessity are based on a hypothesis, that there is and there is not an ontologically necessary being. Apart from the hypotheses they follow, they do not entail that there is or there is not an eternal self existent being.

The conclusion of the argument is based on the fact as Malcolm says, “God’s existence is either impossible or necessary. It can be the former only if the concept of such a being is self contradictory or in some way logically absurd. Assuming that it is not so, it follows that he necessarily exists”. Hick says that Malcolm is equating proposition (i) that the existence of an eternal being is either ontologically necessary or ontologically impossible, with proposition (ii), that the existence of an ontologically necessary being is either logically necessary or logically impossible. The former is validly derived from the concept of God as
self existent and eternal. The second receives its plausibility from its not being distinguished from the former. Once attention is focused upon the distinction between them, the plausibility of (ii) disappears and the argument which depends upon it loses its force.

Now, having tried to find whether the above discussed arguments can lead us to some kind of proof for God's existence. But, since it is now clear that both arguments fell short of proof, the question arises - 'Is an Ontological proof of God's existence possible?'

**Is an Ontological proof of God's existence possible?**

We have seen in the above discussion that the above views on ontological proofs fail the criterion of being the proof of God's existence due to one reason or the other. Kant's argument to this effect rests, as I have discussed, on the assumption that all existential propositions are synthetic. A valid ontological argument would have for its conclusion an analytical existential judgement. Since there cannot be such analytic existential judgements, there can be, on this view, no ontological proofs. But since there is a good reason to believe that there are statements about existence, which are analytic, there is good reason to believe that there can be ontological proofs. Hence, we should, I think, reject as failing to prove that there can be no proof of God's existence by means of an ontological argument. Any argument which assumes that ontological arguments in general must fail.
We should reject, then, two sorts of arguments:

(I) Arguments which assume that all existential propositions are synthetic;

(II) Arguments which have the consequence that there can be no ontological proof of the existence of any thing;

In his editorial introduction to ‘The Existence of God’, Hick offers the following argument for supposing that an ontological proof of God’s existence is impossible:

“the basic philosophic objection to this reasoning is well developed and widely agreed. The objection is that one is never entitled to deduce from a concept that anything exists which corresponds to that concept. The nature of thought on the one hand and of extra-mental reality on the other, and of the distinction between them, is such that there can be no valid inference from the thought of a given kind of being to the conclusion that there is in fact a being of this kind. The mind is free to form concepts of various species of beings which do not exist, and it is impossible to tell from inspection of a concept alone whether or not there is an extra-mental entity answering to it. Only experience can determine this.”

A close look on the Hick’s objection shows that this objection is not really different from the objection raised by Kant. The last sentence of the above para - “only experience can determine whether or not
there is an extra-mental entity answering a concept” - is just an other way of saying that statements to the effect that some extra-mental entity exists cannot be analytic. But it would not be quite true to say that the objection Hick states fails for just the reasons we have noted in connection with Kant. For Hick makes a distinction in his statement of the objection between what we might call ‘thought-entities’ and ‘extra-mental entities’. The Hick’s objection rests on the following presumptions:

(I) There can be no ontological proof for the existence of extra-mental entities;

(II) All statements asserting the existence of extra-mental entities are synthetic.

It is not so clear, since it could be argued that the kind of entities for which ontological proofs can be given are ‘thought entities’. It could be argued for instance, that although it can thus be proved that there exists a prime number between 30 and 33 and that the existential statement ‘There is a prime number between 30 and 33’ is analytic, numbers are not ‘extra-mental’ entities.

It is significant, I think, that we had to resort to statements about mathematical entities in order to find counter examples to the Kantian thesis. But even if our counter examples could thus be rendered harmless against the thesis - ‘All existential statements are synthetic’,
that of itself would not establish the thesis. Why should not the statement ‘God exists’ be the only statement about an ‘extra-mental’ entity which is analytic? If we want a proof that an on ontological proof of divine existence is impossible we should not assume, as Kant and Hick seem to do, that the existence of ‘extra-mental’ entities must be known through experience if it is to be known at all.

However, there is another way of objecting to the possibility of an ontological proof, An ontological argument for the existence of a god needs to start with some statement about the concept ‘God’. Such a statement, being analytic, will be Universal in character. Thus the statement ‘God is eternal’ must be understood in such a context, not as ascribing some property to an individual but as a statement like one of the following

‘All gods are eternal’
‘Anything worthy of the name ‘God’ is eternal
‘Whatever is God is eternal’

But though the premise about the concept ‘God’ is universal, the conclusion of an ontological argument is not. It is not, like the premise, about all things of a certain kind. It asserts that there is at least one individual who is (worthy of the name of) God.

There is a general agreement about the fact that at least certain universal statements should be construed as hypothetical in form for example, ‘All triffids are plants’ should be construed as ‘For
any individual whatever, if it is a triffid, it is a plant’. Now such a hypothetical statement as this does not imply that there are members of the class mentioned in its antecedent. In the case of ‘All triffids are plants’, it is not implied that there are any triffids. No more such a statement as ‘God is eternal’ imply that there is a god. It is a universal hypothetical statement as in any analytic statement of the kind which will serve as the main premise of an ontological argument.

By contrast with such universal statements there are statements which are called particular. Such statements as ‘some politicians are corrupt’ and ‘My dog is spaniel’ are, by contrast, particular. Particular statements assert or imply the existence of something. The existential import of ‘some politicians are corrupt’ is that there are politicians and that there are men that are corrupt. Universal hypothetical statements by contrast, lack existential import. ‘All triffids are plants’ does not imply that there are plants any more than it implies that there are triffids. ‘God is eternal’ does not imply either that there is a god or that anything is eternal, only that if anything is a god, it is eternal.

Now, given that statements which are universal (hypothetical) do not have existential import and that those which are particular do, particular statements cannot be validly inferred from universal ones. Anyone who inferred a particular conclusion from premises which are all universal (hypothetical) would be guilty of bringing an implication
his conclusion which is nowhere to be found in the premises, namely, that there is at least one particular of a kind mentioned in the premises. The inference would be an invalid one. The fallacy involved is, appropriately enough labeled as the 'existential fallacy'.

Now the ontological argument has premises which are wholly a priori. But for it to be a valid argument having a particular conclusion it must have a particular premise. But what particular premise could it have which is also established a priori? Only, it seems, a premise which is itself the conclusion of another ontological proof. Yet just the same problem will arise with this other ontological proof, with the ontological proof that establishes its a priori particular premise and so on to infinity. The alternative is that the ontological argument must be invalid and its invalidity must involve the 'existential fallacy'. For example:

(I) - God is a being having all the perfections.
   - Necessary existence is a perfection
   Therefore, God necessarily exists.

(II) - God is eternal
   - Eternal beings are those whose non-existence is inconceivable.
   Therefore, God’s non-existence is inconceivable.
None of the above arguments would be invalid, if the first premise were not construed as a universal statement. But any particular statement about god already implies His existence. To construe these premises as particular, however, would be question-begging. For the statement ‘God is eternal’, so construed, would be true only if God existed. So to prove that ‘God is eternal’ is true, would need already to have proved that God existed. And any argument whose premises can only be established once the conclusion has been established cannot be used to demonstrate the truth of the conclusion. Hence the ontological proof fails as the ‘proof for the existence of God’. For, as we have seen that ontological argument needs something which it cannot have, namely a particular premise whose truth can be established a priori. This difficulty, however, could be avoided if we were able to establish the truth of the particular premise a posteriori. But, then we would be discussing a different project, that of attempting a cosmological rather than an ontological proof of God’s existence - which I shall discuss in the next chapter.
COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Cosmological Argument is based on the fact that the Universe is a ‘Cosmos’, an ordered system based on rational principles and not a disordered chaos. So, any argument based on this assumption of cosmos is a cosmological argument. Another aspect of this argument is that this is an a posteriori argument because it is based on the observed facts or human experience. On this basis all arguments namely, the argument from Contingency, Design Argument or Teleological Argument and Moral Argument etc. Are cosmological in nature. Further, since all cosmological arguments begin with the observed facts about the world and argue from these facts to God as the most plausible explanation for these facts, all cosmological arguments are inductive in their form of reasoning. Though all the above mentioned arguments are cosmological in nature, generally, the term cosmological argument is reserved for the argument from contingency or causation.

The original formulation of Cosmological Argument is based on the first three of the five proofs of existence of God as propounded by St. Thomas Aquinas. The three proofs of God’s existence as propounded by St Thomas Aquinas are as given below:
First Proof: “Some things in the world are certainly in process of change: this we plainly see. Now any thing in process of change is being changed by something else. This is so because it is characteristic of things in process of change that they do not yet have the perfection towards which they move, though able to have it; whereas as it is characteristic of something causing change to have that perfection already. For to cause change is to bring into being that which was previously only able to be, and this can only be done by something that already is: thus fire which actually hot, causes wood, which is able to be hot, to become actually hot, and in this way causes change in the wood . . .”

Second Proof: “In the observable world causes are found to be ordered in series; we never observe, nor ever could, something causing itself, for this would mean it preceded itself, and this is not possible. Such a series of causes must however stop somewhere; for in it an earlier member causes an intermediate and the intermediate a last (which the intermediate be one or many). Now if you eliminate a cause you also eliminate its effects, so that you cannot have a last cause, nor an intermediate one, unless you have a first. Give therefore no stop in the series of causes and hence no effects, and this would be an open mistake. One is therefore forced to suppose some first cause, to which every one gives the name ‘God’.”

1. Hick, J. Arguments for the existence of God, p.38
2. ibid -p.42
this, for a thing that need not be, one was not; and if everything need

The third Proof: “Some of the things we come across can be but need
not be, for we find them springing up and dying away, thus sometimes in
being and sometimes not. Now everything cannot be like

not be, once upon a time there was nothing. But if that were true there
would be nothing even now, because something that does not exist can
only be brought into being by something already existing. So that if
nothing was in being nothing would be in being now, which contradicts
observation. Not everything therefore is sort of thing that need not be;
there has got to be something that must be. Now a thing that must be,
may or may not owe this necessity to something else. But just as we
must stop somewhere in a series of causes, so also in series of things
which must be and owe this to other things. One is forced to therefore
to suppose something which must be, and owes this to no other things
than itself; indeed it itself is the cause that other things must be”.

Richard Taylor has restated the Cosmological Argument in the
form of ‘Principle of Sufficient Reason’. Here, I shall discuss this
argument as restated by Richard Taylor at length with some reference
to St. Aquinas’ arguments and other Cosmological Arguments. This, to

3. Hick, J, Arguments for the existence of God, pp.43-44
my mind, will have an added benefit for Richard Taylor’s argument includes St. Aquinas arguments from change and causation. These concepts are mere variants of the ‘Principle of Sufficient Reason’.

Richard Taylor’s Cosmological Argument:

“Suppose you were strolling in the woods and, in addition to the sticks, stones, and other accustomed litter of the forest floor, you one day came upon some quite unaccustomed object, something not quite like what you had ever seen before and would never expect to find in such a place. Suppose, for example, that it is a large ball, about your own height, perfectly smooth and translucent. You would deem this puzzling and mysterious, certainly, but if one considers the matter, it is no more inherently mysterious that such a thing should exist than that anything else should exist. If you were quite accustomed to finding such objects of various sizes around you most of the time, but had never seen an ordinary rock, then upon finding a large rock in the woods one day you would be just as puzzled and mystified. This illustrates the fact that something that is mysterious ceases to seem so simply by its accustomed presence. It is strange indeed, for example, that a world such as ours should exist; yet few men are very often struck by this strangeness, but simply take it for granted.

... that it might exist without there being any explanation of its existence, is one that few people would consider worthy of entertaining.
This illustrates a metaphysical belief that seems to be almost a part of reason itself, even though few men ever think upon it; the belief, namely, that there is some explanation for the existence of anything whatever, some reason why it should exist rather than not. The sheer nonexistence of anything, which is not to be confused with the passing out of existence of something, never requires a reason; but existence does. That there should never have been any such ball in the forest does not require any explanation or reason, but that there should ever be such a ball does. If one were to look upon a barren plain and ask why there is not and never has been any large translucent ball there, the natural response would be to ask why there should be; but if one finds such a ball, and wonders why it is there, it is not quite so natural to ask why it should not be, as though existence should simply be taken for granted. That anything should not exist, then, and that, for instance, no such ball should exist in the forest, or that there should be no forest for it to occupy, or no continent containing a forest, or no earth, nor any world at all, do not seem to be things for which there needs to be any explanation or reason; but that such things should be does seem to require a reason.

The principle involved here has been called the principle of sufficient reason. Actually, it is a very general principle, and is best expressed by saying that, in the case of any positive truth, there is some
sufficient reason for it, something which, in this sense, makes it true - in short, that there is some sort of explanation, known or unknown, for everything.

Now some truths depend on something else, and are accordingly called contingent, while others depend only upon themselves, that is, are true by their very natures and are accordingly called necessary.

From the principle of sufficient reason it follows, of course, that there must be a reason, not only for the existence of everything in the world but for the world itself, meaning by ‘the world’ simply everything that ever does exist, except God, in case there is a god. This principle does not imply that there must be some purpose or goal for everything, or for the totality of all things; for explanations need not, and in fact seldom are, teleological or purposeful. All the principle requires is that there be some sort of reason for everything.

If we think of God as ‘the creator of heaven and earth’, and if we consider heaven and earth to include everything that exists except God, then we appear to have, in the foregoing considerations, fairly strong reasons for asserting that God, as so conceived, exists. Now of course most people have much more in mind than this when they think of God, for religions have ascribed to God ever so many attributes that are not at all implied by describing him merely as the creator of the
world; but that is not relevant here. Most religious persons do. In any case, think of God, as being at least the creator, as that being upon which everything ultimately depends, no matter what else they may say about him in addition. It is, in fact, the first item in the creeds of Christianity that God is the ‘creator of heaven and earth’. And, it seems, there are good metaphysical reasons, as distinguished from the persuasions of faith, for thinking that such a creative being exists.

If, as seems clearly implied by the principle of sufficient reason, there must be a reason for the existence of heaven and earth - i.e., for the world - then that reason must be found either in the world itself, or outside it, in something that is literally supernatural, or outside heaven and earth. Now if we suppose that the world - i.e., the totality of all things except God - contains within itself the reason for its existence, we are supposing that it exists by its very nature, that is, that it is a necessary being. In that case there would, of course, be no reason for say that it must depend upon God or anything else for its existence; for if it exists by its very nature, then it depends upon nothing but itself, much as the sun depends upon nothing but itself for its heat. This however, is implausible, for we find nothing about the world or anything in it to suggest that it exists by its own nature, and we do find, on the contrary, ever so many things to suggest that it does not. for in the first place, anything which exists by its very nature must necessarily be eternal and indestructible. It would be self-contradiction to say of
anything that it exists by its own nature, or is a necessarily existing thing, and at the same time to say that it comes into being or passes away, or that it ever could come into being or pass away. Nothing about the world seems at all like this, for concerning anything in the world, we can perfectly easily think of it as being annihilated, or as never having existed in the first place, without there being slightest hint of any absurdity in such a supposition.

The world, in case it happens to exist at all - and this is quite beyond doubt - is contingent and thus dependent upon something other than itself for its existence, if it depends upon anything at all. And it must depend upon something, for otherwise there would be no reason why it exists in the first place. Now that upon which the world depends must be something that either exists by its own nature or does not. If it does not exist by its own nature, then it, in turn, depends for its existence upon something else, and so on. Now then, we can say either of two things; namely, (1) that the world depends for its existence upon something else, which in turn depends on still another thing, this depending upon still another, ad infinitum; or (2) that the world derives its existence from something that exists by its own nature and which is accordingly eternal and imperishable, and is the creator of heaven and earth. The first of these alternatives, however, is impossible, for it does not render a sufficient reason why anything should exist in the first place. Instead of supplying a reason why any world should exist, it
repeatedly begs off giving a reason. It explains what is dependent and perishable in terms of what is itself dependent and perishable, leaving us still without a reason why perishable things should exist at all, which is what we are seeking. Ultimately, then, it would seem that the world, or the totality of contingent or perishable things, in case it exists at all, must depend upon something that is necessary imperishable, and which accordingly exists, not in dependence upon something else, but by its own nature”.

Now, taking a close look on these arguments, we find that all these arguments highlight one thing i.e. the induction from contingent to necessary being. And this induction is carried out on the basis of so-called principle of sufficient reason - “in case of any positive truth, there is some sufficient reason for it, something which in this sense makes it true, in short, there is a sort of explanation, known or unknown, for everything.”

It is due to this fact that the philosophers after Aquina propounded the ‘Arguments from Contingency of the World’. Since everything in the world is contingent and everything existing not only in the world but even the world itself must have a reason for its existence, this is the fact which Copleston highlights in a debate with Russell. In reply to Copleston, Russell says that we cannot talk of ‘necessary’ beings in this context. He is of the view that the

5. Ibid. p-104.
word necessary can only be applied to analytic propositions i.e. to say the propositions of mathematical certainty, for example 2+2 =4 and a bachelor is an unmarried man. These propositions are necessarily true because the denial of these propositions becomes self-contradictory. He says, “... the word ‘necessary’ I should maintain, can only be applied significantly to propositions. And, in fact, only to such as are analytic - that is to say - as it is self-contradictory to deny”6

Again, on the question of a proposition of the form “if there is a contingent being, then there is necessary being”, Russell says that there is no sense in calling some beings as contingent and others as necessary. Because contingent means accidental and there is no reason that these being should be something other than what they are. Copleston raises the question that the existence of a contingent being cannot be explained without the help of a necessary being. To this Russell says that “if you add up chocolates you get chocolates after all and not a sheep”.7

As a whole Russell’s position amounts to saying that the world is just there and the concept of cause which is applicable to particular things in world is not applicable to the whole. And the idea that the world can be explained in causal terms is meaningless.

7. Ibid p-478
As to the 'principle of sufficient reason' - though it sounds very axiomatic and universal, a close look on it will show that it is not really so. At least there are situations where it is not really reasonable to invoke it. For example, - suppose one day while travelling in a railway compartment, you find a number of people as your co-passengers. Suddenly, one of the passengers asks you as to why only these many people or only these particular people are travelling in this compartment. What answer will you give to this man. Surely, it will occur that the questioner has taken leave of his senses. 'Why should there be a reason for this totality of persons being here in this compartment over and above the reasons there are for each of us being here?'

I think this shakes Taylor's principle of sufficient reason which says that 'there must be a reason, not only for the existence of everything but for the world itself, meaning by 'the world' simply everything that ever does exist, except God, in case there is a God.' (I do not know if Russell had this type of idea in his mind when he says that the world is just there and the concept of causality which is applicable to the individual things, is not applicable to the whole.)

Therefore, we can safely conclude that Cosmological proof in the sense of sufficient reason is not really strongly footed and cannot be taken as a proof for the existence of God.