



## The Cosmological Argument in Analytic Philosophy and Traditional *Kalām*

A Five-Day Crash Course

24-28 August 2015

Center for Islamic Theology, University of Tübingen

### Description:

The *kalām* cosmological argument was introduced into the contemporary philosophical community through the work of William Lane Craig and was then developed and critically examined by many prominent Western philosophers and theologians. The lack of English-language resources in the post-Ghazalian *kalām* tradition prevented the contemporary philosophical community from being able to access later developments in the *kalām* tradition. Philosophical developments in the *kalām* cosmological argument have thus taken place in isolation from the more sophisticated post-classical *kalām* tradition. This course is an attempt to reconfigure the debate in the Western philosophical tradition in light of this missing link.

The goal of this Crash Course is to reinvigorate the argument through a conversation between contemporary philosophy and traditional *kalām*. The course will begin with a colloquium between traditional Muslim theologian Dr. Saeed Fodeh and Professor of Philosophy at Augsburg College Dr. Bruce Reichenbach, who will explore potential reconfigurations to the *kalām* cosmological argument based on Dr. Reichenbach's article on the Cosmological Argument in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, which was translated into Arabic and carefully studied by Dr. Fodeh.

### Outline:

On the first day of this course, students will attend a colloquium between Dr. Bruce Reichenbach (Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Augsburg College) and Dr. Saeed Fodeh (traditional *kalām* scholar based in Amman), each of whom will present a paper on the philosophical debates surrounding the cosmological argument, the first from the perspective of analytic philosophy, and the second from the perspective of traditional *kalām*. This will be followed by a collegial discussion in which the two scholars will discuss each other's papers and define important areas of further research.

For the next two days, Dr. Reichenbach will teach important developments in the cosmological argument in the tradition of analytic philosophy, including the Gale-Pruss version of the cosmological argument and Swinburne's inductive cosmological argument.

For the final two days, Dr. Fodeh will teach important aspects of the cosmological argument the *kalām* tradition that are not well understood in the analytic tradition, including sophisticated *kalām* debates around the concepts of infinity and infinite regress, as well as *kalām* atomism and its possible relations to modern physics.

At the end of the course, each student will be tasked (optional) with writing a short research essay that connects between analytic and traditional *kalām* perspectives, which will be reviewed and evaluated by each of the two scholars.

### **Lecturers:**

**Bruce Reichenbach** (PhD Northwestern University) is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Augsburg College (Minneapolis) and author of over 70 publications on a variety of philosophical and theological topics. He is the author or co-author of a number books, including *Introduction to Critical Thinking* (2001), *On Behalf of God: A Christian Ethic for Biology* (1995) and *Evil and a Good God* (1982). His most recent work is a book on epistemic obligations, addressing the question whether we have the right and ability to believe what we want. His other recent projects include three lectures on the relation of religion and science published by Blackwell (2009), book chapters on revelation (2003, 2006) and on a theory of atonement that focuses on healing (2006), and on the "Cosmological Argument" published in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2005, 2008).

**Saeed Fodeh** is a traditional *kalām* scholar who has authored and edited over 60 books on almost every topic of traditional Islamic theology (*kalām*). Some of his notable publications include, *Averroes' Philosophical Position on Kalam and his Effect on Modern Philosophical Debates* (2009) and *An Exhaustive Commentary on the Creed of Tahawi* (2015) His works to-date have all been written in Arabic and this course will present his first original work in the English language, in which he engages the cosmological argument from a *kalām* perspective. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering (Jordan University of Science and Technology), as well as a Bachelor's, Master's (University of Jordan), and PhD in Islamic theology (World Islamic Sciences and Education University WISE, Jordan). His PhD dissertation (awaiting publication) was entitled, "Proofs for the Existence of God between Kalam and Aristotelian Philosophy." He lives and teaches *kalām* in traditional settings in Amman, and travels and lectures to audiences all over the world.

The Crash Course is organised by Kalam Research & Media (Islamic Analytic Theology initiative co-funded by the John Templeton Foundation) in collaboration with the Center for Islamic Theology (University of Tübingen).

Kalam Research & Media (KRM) is a collegial think tank and training center dedicated to research, education, content development, and capacity building in the core areas of Islamic Theology (*Kalām*); Islamic Philosophy & Wisdom; Islamic Philosophy of Science, Technology, & the Environment; Inter-Faith Engagement; Inter-Faith Conflict Prevention & Resolution; Scriptural Reasoning & Hermeneutics; Islamic Professional & Business Ethics; Creative & Critical Thinking; and Compassion Architecture. This course is part of its Islamic Analytic Theology initiative, which is sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation. For more, see <http://www.kalamresearch.com/>

The Crash Course is primarily intended for early career scholars and graduate students (PhD and MA) of theology, philosophy and other related disciplines. Advanced BA students may also be considered in exceptional cases. Please contact Ms Michaela Riester [michaela.riester@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:michaela.riester@uni-tuebingen.de) for registration. Registration deadline is the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2015.

ECTS: Please indicate in your e-mail whether you want to take the Crash Course for credit. Arrangements can be made accordingly.



SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research