Early Modern Women Philosophers and the Cosmological Argument:

A Case Study in Feminist History of Philosophy

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Abstract

This chapter discusses methodology in feminist history of philosophy and shows that women philosophers made interesting and original contributions to the debates concerning the cosmological argument. I set forth and examine the arguments of Mary Astell, Damaris Masham, Catherine Trotter Cockburn, Emilie Du Châtelet, and Mary Shepherd, and discuss their involvement with philosophical issues and debates surrounding the cosmological argument. I argue that their contributions are original, philosophically interesting, and result from participation in the ongoing debates and controversies about the cosmological argument, causal principles, and necessary existence.

Keywords: Cosmological Arguments, Necessary Existence, Causation, God, Astell, Masham, Cockburn, Du Châtelet, Shepherd

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Arguments for the existence of God are common in the early modern period of philosophy. During this time, we see various versions on the ontological, teleological, cosmological, and other arguments for the existence of God. Most philosophers in this period provided their own versions of these arguments along with criticisms of the arguments of their predecessors or contemporaries. For example, Descartes' ontological and cosmological arguments were attempts to improve upon the arguments of Anselm and Aquinas. And while Locke shunned Descartes' ontological argument, his version of the cosmological argument borrows premises from Descartes' work. Leibniz criticized Descartes' version of the ontological argument and claimed that only his version provided a real proof of God's existence. Leibniz also produced a cosmological argument, as well as arguments for God's existence based on the eternal truths and pre-established harmony. Various philosophical articles can be found with interesting discussions of these philosophers' arguments and on the developments of certain forms of the argument, such as design or ontological arguments. However, the place of women philosophers in these discussions has largely been ignored.

Several reasons have been suggested to account for the absence of women in these philosophical discussions.[1] First, it might be thought that women's works are not included in these discussions because women did not produce any original arguments. That is, we might

think that the arguments of early modern women are largely retellings of the arguments produced by male thinkers, and thus they add nothing to our histories. Second, one might think that women philosophers were not actively engaged in the public discussions that lead to the development and defense of certain arguments, so that their arguments were isolated from the philosophical community at large. If this were so, then, although these arguments might be interesting in their own right, they might not fit easily into an historical discussion of the period. Third, one might think although these women philosophers did produce original arguments, they are not sufficiently philosophically interesting or sophisticated. Thus, although their arguments might have been in keeping with others in their own time period, they have nothing special to contribute to our understanding of the issues today. We should note that these three reasons might also apply to the lack of scholarly attention paid to male 'minor' figures in the history of philosophy. However, we might think that women philosophers have been left out of our histories for more pernicious reasons. That is, we might think that women philosophers were not taken as seriously as their male counterparts, not because of any lack of philosophical acumen, but simply because they were female.

The debates about whom we should study in the history of philosophy and the purpose of doing historical work have garnered much attention of late.[2] The issues of canonical figures and methodology are closely related. For it is necessary to determine the purposes of doing historical philosophy before we can adequately determine which figures might best represent these endeavors. Since the issue is much too large to address here, it is not the aim of this paper to provide criteria for inclusion in our histories. However, I hope to show, by providing their views and arguments, that women writing on and about the cosmological argument are likely to meet any reasonable criteria for inclusion. I will show how Mary Astell, Damaris Masham, Catherine

Trotter Cockburn, Emilie du Châtelet, and Mary Shepherd participated in the production and/or criticisms and discussions of the cosmological argument in the period spanning the 17th – 19th centuries. I will demonstrate that those women who produced cosmological arguments put forth both original and interesting arguments. I will also show how these arguments relate to versions of the cosmological arguments given by their contemporaries. In addition, I will discuss the ways in which these women engaged in the controversies and debates of the period. My aim is to provide the reader with an account of these women's contributions to the subject and reasons for including them in our histories.

To begin, I will discuss Mary Astell's argument for the existence of God, which takes Descartes' ontological argument as a starting point. Astell reformulates the Cartesian ontological and cosmological arguments by merging them into one argument in order to address objections that John Locke sets out in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and the correspondence with Stillingfleet. I argue that Astell took seriously these objections and that she attempted to show that the Cartesian arguments did not essentially rely on what one might think is a questionable methodology. Second, I will discuss Damaris Masham's argument. Masham objects to the view found in the John Norris-Mary Astell correspondence that only God is the proper object of our love. In her Arguments, Masham takes care to show that it is only because we are able to know and love God's works that we can come to understand that God is both loving and worthy of worship. In doing so, she creates an original version of the cosmological argument that demonstrates not only that God is the powerful first cause of all things, but is also a loving and good cause. Next, I discuss Catherine Trotter Cockburn arguments concerning God's necessary existence. Cockburn is addressing objections to Samuel Clarke's argument for the existence of God, but she is also demonstrating the way in which we must come to

understand God's necessary existence in order to avoid either uncertainty about God's nature or Spinozism. Then, I discuss Emilie Du Châtelet's argument. Du Châtelet provides an argument that blends elements of Locke's and Leibniz's cosmological arguments, but Du Châtelet's argument avoids the logical errors of Locke's argument. Moreover, her argument is one of the most clear and elegant versions of the cosmological argument to be found in the early modern period. Finally, I discuss Mary Shepherd's cosmological argument, which draws on her methodology for arguing (contra Hume and Berkeley) that we can know that both causation and the external world exist. I explicate Shepherd's wholly original argument, which is based on her unique defense of a realist account of causation and account of our knowledge of external existences.

Before moving into the discussion of these philosophers' arguments, I must address a problem concerning the originality of arguments for the existence of God. A multiplicity of arguments for God's existence appears in this period, and the vast majority of the arguments are not wholly original. That is, most arguments build upon the arguments given by previous philosophers. There are several wholly unique arguments supplied in this time period, but these tend to be peculiar to a particular philosopher's metaphysics. For instance, Leibniz produces an argument for the existence of God based on pre-established harmony, Kant produces a moral argument for the existence of God, and Shepherd produces an argument based on her views of how we attain knowledge of external entities. These are not arguments that others make because other philosophers did not hold Leibniz's views about pre-established harmony, Kant's views about the grounding of morality, or Shepherd's views about how we obtain knowledge of external entities. But of the traditional types of arguments for the existence of God (the ontological, cosmological, design or teleological arguments), most philosophers are building

upon arguments that have their origins in Plato and Aristotle, Anselm, and Aquinas. The cosmological argument has its roots in Aristotle's 'prime mover' argument and Aquinas' 'five ways' to prove the existence of God. In general, I take a cosmological argument to be one that begins with some empirical fact about the world (e.g., that the world exists, that there are perfections in the world, that I exist, that there are contingent beings, etc.) and proceeds via a causal or explanatory principle to demonstrate that a first cause of this fact must also exist.

These arguments have long and illustrious histories, and most philosophers in the modern period produced arguments meant to overcome the objections to previous versions of the arguments.[3] That is, they tried to produce stronger arguments. In addition, they produced versions that were compatible with their own metaphysical views or philosophical claims. The upshot is that in discussing the cosmological argument, we will always be able to trace similarities in versions to previous versions. This does not mean that a philosopher has not strengthened the argument or has not made a contribution to the development of the philosophical debate with respect to the argument.

With this caveat in place, I will begin with Mary Astell's version of the cosmological argument.

1.1 Mary Astell's Cosmological Argument

Mary Astell (1666 – 1731) was educated in Cartesian philosophy largely through English sources, in particular the Cambridge Platonists. She wrote political tracts and treatises on women's education and theology. Many of her works present objections to the philosophy and theology of John Locke. Astell presents arguments for the existence of God in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part II* (SP II 179-182) and in *The Christian Religion* (CR §7-§10).[4] The arguments are similar in form and content, and I have argued elsewhere that they are a blend of

the ontological and cosmological arguments.[5] Astell's arguments are influenced by Descartes' versions of the ontological and cosmological arguments as given in the *Meditations*.[6] In producing her arguments for the existence of God, Astell entered the philosophical debate on the side of Descartes and Edward Stillingfleet against John Locke. In her formulation of the arguments, Astell is concerned to address Locke's objections against using our idea of God to prove the existence of God. Locke first put forth his objections to the Cartesian arguments in *The Essay on Human Understanding,* and the controversy was continued in Locke's published letter to Stillingfleet after the latter attacked Locke in his *A Discourse in Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Here, I will briefly discuss Locke's criticisms and show how Astell reformulates the Cartesian arguments to meet Locke's objections.

Descartes uses our (innate) idea of God as the basis of two proofs for God's existence: in the Third Meditation cosmological argument and in the Fifth Meditation ontological argument.[7] Roughly, the Third Meditation argument seeks the cause of our idea of a being with infinite formal reality, or a being with all the perfections, and the Fifth Meditation argument claims that we have an idea of a being with all the perfections, including existence, therefore, a being with all the perfections exists. In addition, Descartes produces a second cosmological argument in the Third Meditation that seeks the cause of our existence and preservation in time. In the *Essay*, Locke objects to the arguments that make use of the idea of God in order to prove God's existence. Locke writes,

> But yet, I think, this I may say, that it is an ill way of establishing this Truth, and silencing Atheists, to lay the whole stress of so important a Point, as this, upon that sole Foundation: And take some Men's having that *Idea* of GOD in their Minds, (for 'tis evident, some Men have none, and some worse than none, and the most very different,) for the only proof of a Deity; and out of an over-fondness of that Darling Invention, cashier or at least endeavor to invalidate all other Arguments, and forbid us to hearken to those proofs, as being weak, or fallacious, which our own Existence and the sensible parts of the Universe, offer so clearly, and cogently to our Thoughts, that I deem it

> impossible for a considering Man to withstand them. (Locke, *Essay*, Book IV, Ch X, §7, 622)

Locke maintains that it is clear that some people have no idea of God at all, let alone one of God as a being with infinite reality or perfection. Thus, Locke maintains that arguments that claim an innate idea of God will have no force against an atheist who lacks such an idea or those with differing ideas of God. In the correspondence with Stillingfleet, Locke claims that he did not want to produce his criticisms of the Cartesian arguments because the arguments might have force for some people. Locke argues that we should not disparage any argument for the existence of God because different arguments appeal to different people. However, Locke thinks the best (as in least objectionable) arguments begin with qualities, such as thought and perception, that everyone must acknowledge exist in the world, and conclude with the only possible cause of these qualities – an eternal thinking substance.

In 1697, the year Astell publishes *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part II*, Locke publishes his first letter to Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester. In the letter, Locke expands upon his criticisms of the Cartesian arguments. In addition to repeating his claim that some men lack the idea of God, Locke maintains that knowledge and certainty does not lie in clear and distinct ideas, as Descartes held. Thus, Locke denies that the having of a clear and distinct idea of a perfect being is sufficient for being certain that such a being is possible. He writes, "…[F]or knowledge and certainty, in my opinion, lies in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, such as they are, and not always in having perfectly clear and distinct ideas" (Locke, *Works*, Vol. 3, 42). Instead of holding that certainty and knowledge are the result of the having of clear and distinct ideas, Locke believes it lies in reasoning to the agreement or disagreement between several of our ideas. That is, Locke does not think that a single idea, no matter how clear and distinct it may be, can lead us to certainty because it is only by examining

various of our ideas together that we can know whether there is an agreement or disagreement among our various perceptions.

Finally, Locke argues we can never prove the actual or real existence of anything from our ideas. He writes,

> Though the complex idea for which the sound God stands (whether containing in it the idea of necessary existence or no, for the case is the same) will not prove the real existence of a being answering to that idea, any more than any other idea in any one's mind will prove the existence of any real being answering that idea. (Locke, *Works*, Vol. 3, 55)

So, Locke presses three objections against using our idea of God as the sole basis for proofs of the existence of God: (1) some people have no idea of God or no idea of God as a perfect being, (2) clear and distinct ideas are not sufficient for certainty and knowledge, and (3) having an idea of something does not prove the real existence of that thing.

Astell addresses Locke's objections in the formulations of her argument for God's existence. Astell begins her discussion of the existence of God in SP II by considering the question, "Whether there is a GOD, or a Being Infinitely Perfect?" Descartes's ontological argument turns on the clear and distinct idea of a being with all the perfections. However, in order to address Locke's objection that the having of one clear and distinct idea is insufficient for certainty and real existence, the argument must be reformulated. Astell modifies the Cartesian argument with an eye to answering Locke's objection that certainty can only come from the comparing of our ideas. She writes,

> We are then to Examin the Agreement between our Idea of GOD and that of Existence. Now this may be discerned by Intuition, for upon a View of our Ideas we find that Existence is a Perfection, and the Foundation of all other Perfections, since that which has no Being cannot be suppos'd to have any Pefection. And tho the Idea of Existence is not Adequate to that of Perfection, yet the Idea of Perfection Includes that of Existence, and if *That* Idea were divided into parts, one part of it wou'd exactly agree with *This*. So that if we will allow that *Any* Being is Infinite in All Perfections, we cannot deny that

> Being Exists; Existence it self being one Perfection, and such an one as all the rest are built upon (Astell, SP II, 180).

Here, we can see that Astell wants to show that the Cartesian proof can be given using the Lockean method of comparing ideas. Descartes' version of the argument claims that existence is simply one of the perfections included in our idea of a perfect being. From this, it follows that a perfect being exists. However, Astell takes care to show that the idea of existence is included in our idea of perfection because without it there could be nothing in which all the perfections could inhere. She claims that when we compare our idea of perfection and our idea of existence, we can see the relation and agreement between the two. Our idea of perfection contains the idea of existence because without existence there is no basis for any perfection. While this argument may not be an improvement on the Cartesian original, it is still an attempt to use the Lockean method of comparing our ideas rather than just examining a single one.

Astell then goes on to give a cosmological argument in answer to the questions, "Why is it necessary that All Perfections shou'd be Centered in One Being, is't not enough that it be parcel'd out amongst many? And tho it be true that that Being who has all the Perfections must needs Exist, yet where's the Necessity of an All-Perfect Being?" (Astell, SP II, 180). Here, Astell turns to Descartes' second cosmological proof where he argues that only a perfect God is capable of causing our existence and sustaining our existence, given the perfections that we exhibit. In presenting a causal argument based on perfections that we find in the world, Astell avoids Locke's objection that some people have no idea of God and so arguments based on this idea will have no force for them. However in his own proof, Descartes claims that we can know that God is a single being because the ideas of unity, simplicity, and the inseparability of the attributes, are contained in his idea of a perfect being (Descartes, AT VII 50/CSM 34). This again is susceptible to the Lockean objection that we cannot attain certainty or real existence

from our ideas. So, Astell produces her own causal argument in order to meet the Lockean objections. She argues that to answer this question, we must look for "proofs and intermediate ideas," and that the very question which she is addressing will provide one.[8] She writes,

> For those Many whose Particular Ideas it wou'd have joyn'd together to make a Compound one of All Perfection, are no other than Creatures, as will appear if we consider our Idea of a Particular Being and of Creature, which are so far from having any thing to distinguish 'em, that in all Points they resemble each other. Now this Idea naturally suggests to us that of Creation, or a Power of giving Being to that which before the exerting of that Power had none, which Idea if we use it as a Medium, will serve to discover to us the necessity of an All-Perfect Being. (Astell, SP II, 180-1)

Astell claims that if we compare our idea of particular being and of creature, we will see that they are the same idea and that it is the idea of all particular beings joined together that we compound to get the idea of many beings containing all the perfections.[9] She then goes on to show that particular beings cannot be the first cause of themselves because all of them come into (and go out of) existence. If a being that comes into existence were to cause its own existence, it would have to exist before it exists to do so, which Astell claims is absurd.[10] Thus, we must have recourse to a being that is not a creature and is self-existent as the first cause of all creatures. Astell argues, as does Locke, that such a being would have to be eternal because there could be no time when there was nothing since it is impossible that anything should come into existence from nothing. Moreover, Astell argues that this self-existent, eternal being must have all the perfections since it communicates them to creation. She writes,

> Since creatures with their Being receive all that depends on it from him their Maker; Since none can give what he has not, and therefore he who Communicates an innumerable variety of Perfections to his Creatures, even all that they enjoy, must needs contain in himself all those Beauties and Perfections he is pleas'd to Communicate to Inferior Beings; nothing can be more Plain and Evident than that there is a GOD, and that the Existence of an All-Perfect Being is Absolutely Necessary. (Astell, SPII, 182)

I have shown that although Astell's arguments are deeply indebted to Descartes, she provided versions of the arguments that met Locke's three objections to the original Cartesian

versions. In doing so, Astell entered into the public dispute between Cartesians and Lockeans about the methodology best suited to providing arguments for God's existence. Although it may seem that Astell gives over the Cartesian methodology in favor of Locke's, she does so in order to show that the Cartesian arguments for the existence of God either do involve the agreement of our ideas or do not rely on our the idea of God at all. The arguments that Astell produces would be amenable to both Cartesians and Lockeans.

1.2 Damaris Masham's Cosmological Argument

Damaris Masham (1659-1708) was the daughter of the Cambridge Platonist philosopher, Ralph Cudworth, and a close friend of John Locke. She puts forth her philosophical views in her published works and her correspondence with G.W. Leibniz. Masham's two published works were published anonymously and at various points taken to be the work of John Locke. Masham's arguments for the existence of God can be found in her *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God*, 1696 (DLG) and *Occasional Thoughts in Reference to a Vertuous or Christian Life,* 1705 (OT).[11] Both arguments are similar and are versions of the cosmological argument. In the *Discourse*, Masham is primarily concerned with arguing against and John Norris's (and so Malebranche's) conception of God as expressed in his published correspondence with Mary Astell, *Letters Concerning the Love of God*.[12] There, Norris argues that God is the only proper object of our desirous love because he is the only real good. Created beings, he argues, are worthy only of the love of benevolence. Norris grounds this doctrine concerning the love of God in occasionalism. Norris held that since God is the sole cause of sensation he is also the only cause of our pleasures and good. Consequently, God is the only proper object of our desirous love.[13] Astell, although not an occasionalist, also held in the correspondence that God is the only

real good and proper object of our love, and that created beings were merely instruments of God's will (albeit instruments with their own real efficacy).

Masham's reasons for rejecting the Norris/Malebranche position are twofold: (1) she believes that the view undermines common sense and morality, and (2) she believes that the view undermines the only way we can come to know and love God. I will concentrate on her second reason for rejecting this position as it concerns her argument for the existence of God.

Masham, like Locke, rejects innate ideas. Instead, she holds that all our ideas come through experience via sensation and reflection. Since God is an immaterial being, we cannot have direct experience of him. Thus, Masham holds that the only way to come to know and love God is through the experience that we have of his works. She writes, 'God is an invisible Being: And it is by his Works, that we are led both to know, and to love him. They lead us to their invisible Author. And if we lov'd not the Creatures, it is not conceiveable how we should love God' (DLG, 62).

According to Masham, we come to know that God exists as an intelligent and loving creator through reflection on our own existence and through the pleasing nature of the world around us. Masham believes that through recognition of the pleasing nature of the world, we come to love other creatures. This experience provides us with the idea of love, and leads us to the belief that the one who is ultimately responsible for our pleasure, God, love us and we should love him. However, if Norris and Astell are correct, then we should not love the created beings around us. By denying us the love of God's works, Norris and Astell block what Masham sees as the only effective way of knowing that a loving God exists. Masham acknowledges that a version of the cosmological argument is still open to someone who holds the Norris/Astell view. She writes,

> I suppose it must be reply'd by such a one, That as he was not the Author of his own Being, and saw clearly that he could not be produced by nothing; He was thereby led to the Acknowledgment of a Superiour Being, to whom he was indebted for his own; and therefore stood obliged to love him. (DLG, 62-3)

Masham does agree that it is through the realization that we are neither self-caused nor caused by nothing that we come to the conclusion that a higher being must exist. Masham claims that other humans are not powerful enough to be the cause of the existence of all humans. She writes, "…our own Existence, and that of other Beings, has assur'd us of the Existence of some Cause more Powerful than these Effects…" (DLG, 64). However, she does not think that a proof of a powerful cause of our existence is sufficient for showing that a being worthy of our love, such as the Christian God, exists. She writes,

> But Being, or Existence, barely consider'd, is so far from being a Good, that in the state of the Damn'd, few are so Paradoxical as not to believe it an intolerable Misery: And many, even in this World, are so unhappy, that they would much rather part with their Existence, than be eternally continued in the State they are in. (DLG, 63)

In the quote above, we see that Masham argues that even if we understand that there must be a first powerful cause of all existence, an argument that generates God as the mere author of being does not show him to be good or praiseworthy. Given that some beings have such a miserable existence that they would sooner not exist at all, being the cause of these beings' existence is not sufficient for an obligation to love the creator. We cannot deny that there are such beings. Masham thinks that the proof of God as merely omnipotent will neither suffice for our loving God nor for grounding our moral duty to him and to each other. She writes, 'For God as Powerful (which is all we should know of him, consider'd barely as a Creator) is no more an

Object of Love than of Hate, or Fear; and is truly an Object only of Admiration' (DLG, 64). However, Masham thinks that if we find pleasure in our own being and the beings around us, we would have reason to love God.

> The Author of our Being therefore merits not our Love, unless he has given to us such a Being as we can Love. Now if none of the Objects that every way surround us, were pleasing to us; How could our Beings, that have a continual Communication with, and necessary Dependence upon these, be so? (DLG, 63)

Masham defines love as 'that Disposition, or Act of the Mind, we find in our selves toward any we are pleas'd with' (DLG, 18). We first get our idea of love through the pleasure that we receive through our relations with other creatures. The love of those around us gives us reason to believe that the one who created us also loves us. Masham writes,

> And like as our own Existence, and that of other Beings, has assur'd us of the Existence of some Cause more Powerful than these Effects; so also the Loveliness of his Works as well assures us, that that Cause, or Author, is yet more Lovely than they, and consequently the Object the most worthy of our Love. (DLG, 64)

Even though there are some instances of misery and pain in the world, the overall beauty of the world suffices to show us that the author loves and cares for those creatures he creates.

Masham's argument seeks to show that God exists and is not only powerful, but intelligent and most worthy of love. However, one might object that her argument does not guarantee the unity of God. It is consistent with her argument that there be several causes of our existence. For instance, there might be a more powerful cause of humans, such as angels, which then in turn, have a more powerful cause, *ad infinitum*. Alternatively, we might think that there are several very powerful beings that together create all creatures.

As said earlier, Masham's argument in *Occasional Thoughts* is similar to the version in the *Discourse*, but after presenting the argument in *Occasional Thoughts* she makes an attempt to show that the properties of the first cause must inhere in a single substance. She begins the argument with a statement of her methodology.

> To see what light we receive from Nature to direct our Actions, and how far we are Naturally able to obey that Light; Men must be consider'd purely as in the state of Nature, viz. as having no extrinsick Law to direct them, but indu'd only with a faculty of comparing their distant Ideas by intermediate Ones, and Thence of deducing, or inferring one thing from another; whereby our Knowledge immediately received from Sense, or Reflection, is inlarg'd to a view of Truths remote, or future, in an Application of which Faculty of the mind to a consideration of our own Existence and Nature, together with the beauty and order of the Universe, so far as it falls under our view, we may come to the knowledge of a First Cause; and that this must be an Intelligent Being, Wise and Powerful, beyond what we are able to conceive. (OT, 60-1)

First, by means of reflection, we can consider our own existence and nature. From such refection, we can infer that the cause of our existence is intelligent. Second, we can consider our ideas from sensation concerning the order and beauty of the universe. From this, we can infer that the first cause of the universe is wise and powerful. The wisdom of the first cause is manifest in the orderly nature of the universe, and the power of the first cause is manifest in the production of the universe out of nothing. She continues:

> And as we delight in our selves, and receive pleasure from the objects which surround us, sufficient to indear to us the possession and injoyment of Life, we cannot from thence but infer, that this Wise and Powerful Being is also most Good, since he has made us out of

> nothing to give us a Being wherein we find such Happiness, as makes us very unwilling to part therewith. (OT, 61-2)

Since we have been provided with those faculties and external objects that are necessary for our pleasure and happiness, we can infer that the first cause of the universe is good. Finally, she argues that the attributes manifest when we contemplate the universe – intelligence, wisdom, power, and goodness – must inhere in a substance. The substance that contains these attributes is the first cause, i.e., God. She writes:

> And thus, by a consideration of the Attributes of God, visible in the Works of the Creation, we come to a knowledge of his Existence, who is an Invisible Being: For since Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which we manifestly discern in the production and conservation of our selves, and the Universe, could not subsist independently of some substance for them to inhere in, we are assur'd that there is a substance where unto they do belong, or of which they are the Attributes. (OT, 62)

Masham holds that since beauty and purpose hold throughout the universe, and that only a great power could instill such features, that there must be a directing mind which is the substantial first cause of the entire universe. Moreover, in this work, Masham attempt to address the problem of the unity of God. Masham believes that we can see that there must be one 'steady, uniform, and unchangeable' will that directs all things, and that we can know this from the 'frame and government of the universe' (OT, 68-9). She writes, '…the Divine Will cannot be (like ours) successive Determinations without dependence, or connection one upon another; much less inconsistent, contradictory, and mutable; but one steady, uniform, unchangeable result of infinite Wisdom and Benevolence, extending to, and including All his Works' (OT, 69). Ultimately, Masham's claim that we can know the unity of God rests on two inferences. First, we know that

the properties that the first cause has must inhere in a substance. Second, we know that this substance is one because otherwise we would not find the consistency and unity of laws and purposes that we find in the universe.[14]

Masham produces a wholly original argument for the existence of God that shows the importance of our knowledge and love of God's creation as well as demonstrating the perfections of God that make him worthy of our worship and love. Her arguments address an important objection to traditional cosmological arguments; namely, that they only succeed in showing that God is powerful while neglecting the important characteristics of goodness and wisdom. Moreover, her arguments provide an effective answer to the Norris/Astell claim that God is the only proper object of our desirous love. Masham contends that it is only through the love of creatures that we can generate an argument that properly captures the praiseworthy nature of God.

1.3 Catherine Trotter Cockburn's Defense of Necessary Existence

Next, I would like to consider the work of Catherine Trotter Cockburn (1679 – 1749). Cockburn was a successful playwright in her youth and turned to philosophical and theological writing later. She was the first woman to defend John Locke's work in print (*Defense of Locke*, 1702) and would later defend the work of Samuel Clarke. Cockburn does not produce an original cosmological argument. However, she defends central components of many cosmological arguments: necessary existence and the principle of sufficient reason. In her 'Remarks on some passages in the translator's Notes upon Archbishop King's Origin of Evil,' Cockburn defends Samuel Clarke's cosmological argument from criticisms made by Edmund Law published in the notes of his translation of William King's work.[15]

Edmund Law's objections to Clarke's conception of necessary existence rely mainly on the claim that 'necessary existence' is an equivocal term. He claims that Clarke's arguments trade on the equivocation, and that no single notion of absolute necessity is to be found. Law maintains that necessity is primarily applied to means, as in *some means are necessary to achieve a certain end*. He believes that there is little sense to be made of the idea of absolute necessity with respect to existence. In his criticism of Clarke's use of the terms 'necessary' or 'absolutely necessary' existence in his proofs concerning God's existence and nature, Law argues that we can only understand that an independent being is necessary given the existence of dependent beings.[16] While Law affirms that God does exist, he denies that God has necessary existence. He thinks there are two ways in which we use the term 'necessary existence.' One way is as a description of a being whose existence is necessary in order to explain the existence of other beings. In this sense, according to Law, the necessity is *relative*. The other use of necessary existence involves the *manner* in which something itself exists. In this sense, a being is necessary if its non-existence is impossible.[17] According to Law, what is necessary is the conditional 'if dependent beings exist, then an independent being exists.' However, he claims that Clarke understands this claim as 'if dependent beings exist, then an independent being necessarily exists.'[18] So, Law thinks that Clarke confuses the necessity of the conditional with the necessity of the consequent.

Law also provides an objection to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) that Clarke relies on both for his proof of the existence of God and for his arguments concerning the divine attributes. He calls PSR 'that false maxim which Leibnitz lays down as the foundation of all philosophy,' and states the principle as 'nothing is without a reason, why it is rather than not, and why it is so rather than otherwise.'[19] His objection is that if we require a ground or reason for

God's existence, as Clarke does when he claims that God's nature is the ground of his necessary existence, then we must also require a ground or reason for that ground, and so on. This will lead to an infinite regress. Law argues that in order to avoid this regress, we must find an exception to the need for a reason or cause. This exception, he argues, is found in things that are eternal. He claims that coming into existence is a sort of 'mutation' or change, which requires a cause. However, if something *never comes into* existence, that is, if it is eternal, then no cause is required.[20] Law contends that we must say that the independent being is simply *without* a cause. Otherwise, we find ourselves without an argument for the existence of God.[21]

Cockburn defends the concept of necessary existence, and provides several arguments against Law's objections.

First, Cockburn argues that according to the PSR, there must be a reason for the existence of every entity – even an eternal one. The reason that God exists is that his non-existence is impossible, so God's essence contains necessary existence. Since God's existence is necessary, it is not possible for God to go out of existence. She argues that if an independent being could exist without such a reason, then it would be possible the he go out of existence without a reason as well. She claims that since Law thinks that God is an eternal being, he cannot accept this consequence, and so should accept PSR and God's necessary existence.

Second, Cockburn addresses Law's contention that things without beginnings require no cause or reason for their existence. Cockburn argues that if we were to accept that God, as an eternal being, need have no reason or cause for his existence, then we would be left with no reply to the Spinozist, who claims that the universe is eternal and exists of brute necessity. She writes,

> But this, instead of being an answer to the followers of Spinoza, would be a plain begging the question, since they maintain, that the universe has existed eternally, absolutely

> without any cause or reason of existence; and I see not how they can be confuted by those, who affirm the same of God. (CTCPW, 93)

Spinoza had argued that God, or the world, is eternal and necessary. Since many of Cockburn's contemporaries saw the materialist philosophy of the Spinozists as one of the main opponents of rational theology and moral philosophy, any view that gave credence to their views was unacceptable. Cockburn's main point that is that without PSR there is no way to rule out the claim that the universe might be eternal and necessary. This undermines any *a posteriori* argument for God's existence and is a genuine concern for those interested in grounding moral theory in God's nature or commands.

Finally, Cockburn addresses Law's contention that necessity is relative. She writes,

> Most of our knowledge is indeed acquired by a deduction of one truth from another; and therefore, most of the truths we are acquainted with, may be called relative, with respect to the manner of discovering them, tho' many of them may be in themselves absolutely true.…And may something like this be the case of relative and absolute necessity? We perceive, that the first cause must necessarily have always existed, from the absurdities, that would follow the contrary supposition. This is indeed a consequential necessity, which infers nothing of the modus of the divine existence; but may not this lead us to see, that there must be some absolute necessity in the divine nature itself, which made it impossible, that he should ever have not existed, or that he should ever cease to exist, tho' the manner or ground of this necessity surpasses our comprehension? (CTCPW, 94)

In this passage, Cockburn argues that even though we may come to the knowledge of God's existence by way of an argument that would make God's existence necessary only in relation to the existence of dependent beings, this does not show that absolute necessity does not apply to

his nature. For once we arrive at the truth of the existence of such a being, we must investigate the notion of such a being. From the existence of an independent or self-existent being much else can be derived. She writes,

> …if the first cause is necessarily existent, it must have always existed, and cannot possibly ceast to exist: And not only eternity, but several other attributes, are deducible from this principle, as immensity, unity, etc. Whereas from existence without any cause or reason, nothing seems to be certainly deducible. (CTCPW, 93)

In addition, Cockburn thinks the claim that God cannot destroy himself or be other than he is equivalent to saying God is necessarily existent. She writes, 'Do we not allow necessity of existence in the divine being, when we suppose, that it cannot be destroyed, even by his own omnipotent will, that can annihilate all other things?' (CTCPW, 94). Although Law may be correct in saying that Clarke's version of the cosmological argument does not prove that necessity belongs to God's nature, it is, according to Cockburn, something we can deduce if we accept PSR.

Cockburn's arguments against Law systematically show the weaknesses of his position. She argues that Law's views on the relativity of necessity do not rule out arguments for God's necessary existence, that without this notion we cannot know that God is eternal, nor can we rule out the world as the independent cause of all things. Moreover, she shows that by accepting the principle of sufficient reason, as Clarke does, we can have more certain knowledge of God's existence and nature.

1.4 Emilie Du Châtelet's Cosmological Argument

Emilie Du Châtelet (1706 – 1749) was the first person to translate (with commentary) Newton's *Principia Mathematica* into French. Although married, she was the longtime lover of

Voltaire, and the two spent many years working together on scientific experiments and various philosophical projects. Du Châtelet studied Mandeville (she translated *The Fable of the Bees* into French), Descartes, Locke, and later, Leibniz. Du Châtelet presents her cosmological argument in her *Institutions de Physique*.[22] In this work, Du Châtelet explicates Newtonian physics and provides a metaphysical grounding and methodology for truth in the sciences.[23] She worked on the project for at least three years. During this time, she moved from metaphysical views that more closely resembled those of Locke and Newton to ones that reflected a deep appreciation for the *a priori* principles of Leibniz.[24] While her early drafts of the initial chapters of the *Institutions*, were largely based on her study of Locke and Newton, Du Châtelet was not satisfied with the metaphysical skepticism of the British empiricists. She studied the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence prior to her work on the *Institutions*, but it was not until 1739 that she began a study of Leibnizian metaphysics in earnest.[25] It was Leibniz's 'two great principles' — the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason — which seemed to impress Du Châtelet the most. She devotes the first chapter of the *Institutions* to her discussion of these principles of our knowledge. She defines the principle of contradiction as 'that which simultaneously affirms and denies the same thing,' and tells us that the principle shows that which is impossible is that which implies a contradiction (IP, §4). The principle of sufficient reason is 'that [which] makes us understand why this thing is what it is, rather than something completely different' (IP, §8).

As said above, Du Châtelet was interested in providing the ontological ground for the rationality and comprehensibility of the sciences, and physics in particular. In addition to the principles of our knowledge, she believed that the existence of a supremely rational, good, and powerful being would provide such a ground. Although some commentators have suggested that

Du Châtelet's cosmological argument is a mere restatement of Leibniz's argument, it actually contains elements of both Locke's and Leibniz's cosmological arguments. The argument reflects her appreciation of Locke's belief that our ideas come from experience as well as her acceptance of Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason.[26]

Du Châtelet's begins her argument with a claim about what we know exists via experience, she then argues via the causal principle that God is the first cause of the world. Her initial empirical claim is that 'Something exits, since I exist.' This is nearly identical to the first premise that Locke uses in his cosmological argument in the *Essay on Human Understanding*.[27] Locke writes, 'I think it is beyond question that *Man has a clear Perception of his own Being*; he knows certainly, that he exists, and that he is something' (Locke, *Essay* IV.x.2, 619). It should be noted that here she is not following Leibniz who begins his cosmological argument with the claim that the world exists.[28] Du Châtelet agrees with Descartes and Locke that it is a self-evident truth that one knows one exists. Whereas Locke held that the knowledge one has of one's own existence is gained through reflection on one's own mental states, and thus the belief that 'I exist' is empirical but still indubitable, Du Châtelet argues (IP 7) that Descartes' cogito is an argument that employs the principle of non-contradiction to prove that the thinker exists. She writes,

> The principle of contradiction has always been used in philosophy. Aristotle, and after him all philosophers used it, and Descartes used it in his philosophy to prove that we exist. For it is certain that one who doubted that he existed would have in the fact of his very doubt a proof of his existence, since it implies a contradiction that one might have an idea whatever it may be, and consequently a doubt, while at the same time not being in existence. (IP, §7)

While there are certainly many ways of understanding the Cogito without the principle of non-contradiction (indeed, without thinking it is an argument at all), I believe that Du Châtelet's interpretation is as follows.[29] Suppose, for *reductio*, that is it possible both that I have an idea that I do not exist and that I do not exist. However, if I have an idea that I do not exist, then it is not possible that I do not exist. If I do not exist, then it is not possible that I have an idea that I do not exist. Therefore, it is not possible both that I have an idea that I do not exist and that I do not exist. By interpreting Descartes as, at least tacitly, relying on the principle of non-contradiction, and claiming that all philosophers since Artistotle also used it, Du Châtelet prepares her readers for further Leibnizian principles.

Du Châtelet next claims that 'Since something exists, it must be the case that something has existed from all eternity; otherwise it would have to have been the case that nothing, which is only a negation, had produced all that exists' (IP, §19). Here again, du Châtelet's argument follows Locke's argument. In Locke's argument, the claim that something has always existed because something exists now is supported by the principle *ex nihilo, nihil fit* – from nothing comes nothing.[30] According to this principle, there can be no effect without a cause. As Du Châtelet continues, it is 'a contradiction in terms [that nothing should produce something], because that is to say that a thing has been produced while acknowledging no cause of its existence' (IP, §19). You can see the resemblance in her words to the following passage from Locke:

> In the next place, Man knows by an intuitive Certainty, that bare nothing can no more produce any real Being, than it can be equal to two right Angles.…If therefore we know there is some real Being, and that Non-entity cannot produce any real Being, it is an

> evident demonstration, that from Eternity there has been something…. (Locke, *Essay*, IV.x.3)

Next, Du Châtelet infers that 'the being which has existed from all eternity must exist necessarily and not derive its existence from any cause' (IP, §19). Here it looks like Du Châtelet follows Locke in making a logical mistake. Locke follows the passage quoted above:

> Next, it is evident, that what had its Being and Beginning from another, must also have all that which is in, and belongs to its Being from another too. All the Powers it has, must be owing to, and received from the same Source. This eternal Source of all being must also be the Source and Original of all Power; and so this eternal Being must also be the most powerful. (Locke, *Essay* IV.x.4, 620)

Locke argues that since nothing can come from nothing, and something exists, there must have existed something always. However, from this, it does not follow that only *one* thing has existed eternally for there might have been an infinite chain of beings. Rather, we can only validly conclude that something or other exists at every time, and cannot infer anything about how many things exist. Thus, it seems Locke's argument for the existence of an eternal being is invalid.[31]

The question is, then, does Du Châtelet also make the same error? It would seem from the first sentence of IP 19.3, quoted above, that she does. But a consideration of the whole text in this section shows that she does not. Du Châtelet, unlike Locke, provides a reason for ruling out the possibility of a chain of contingent beings in favor of one necessary being. She writes,

> One easily sees that in going on in this manner to infinity, we must arrive at a necessary being who exists *per se*, or else admit an infinite chain of beings, which taken all together, do not have an external cause of their existence (since all beings enter into this

> infinite chain) and for which each [being] in particular has no internal cause, since none exists *per se*, and they derive their existence from each other in a gradual series to infinity. Thus, some suppose there is a chain of beings, [each of] which separately have been produced by a cause, and which taken as a whole have been produced by nothing, which is a contradiction in terms. (IP, §19)

Du Châtelet's commitment to the principle of sufficient reason allows her to argue that the entire chain of beings requires a single cause. Leibniz uses this same reasoning in his version of the cosmological argument. It is clear that Du Châtelet uses the principle to justify the move from there having always been something in existence to there being some *one* thing that has always existed. For, even if there were an infinite chain of beings, each being explaining the existence of the one proceeding from it, we still require an explanation for the existence of the entire chain. In addition, Du Châtelet thinks that without a necessary being as the first cause, there would be no explanation for the interconnection we find among all things within the universe. She writes,

> Without the principle of sufficient reason, one would no longer be able to say that this universe, whose parts are so interconnected, could only be produced by a supreme wisdom, for if there can be effects without sufficient reason, all might have been produced by accident, that is to say, by nothing. (IP, §8)

She then need only argue for the sort of thing that can explain the existence of all contingent things. She writes,

> All that exists has a sufficient reason for its existence, so the sufficient reason for the existence of a being must be in the being itself or outside of it. Now the reason for the existence of a contingent being cannot be in the being itself,

> because if it carried within itself the sufficient reason for its existence, it would be impossible that it not exist, which is contradictory to the definition of a contingent being. The sufficient reason for the existence of a contingent being must therefore necessarily be outside of itself, since it cannot have it in itself. (IP, §5)

Her conclusion is that only a necessary being which carries the sufficient reason for its own existence in itself can be the cause of all contingent things.

> Therefore, since this universe carries the visible marks of a contingent existence…it cannot contain the cause of its existence. Thus, it must come from a necessary being, who contains the sufficient reason for the existence of all contingent beings, and for its own [existence], and this being is God. (IP, §6)

It is clear that Du Châtelet's version of the cosmological argument is both sophisticated and clear. She begins with premises derived from certain experience and through adoption of the principle of sufficient reason, shows that only a necessary being could be the cause of these experiences. Du Châtelet's version of the cosmological argument is an improvement upon Locke's version of the argument. She avoids the logical mistake he makes by her adoption of the principle of sufficient reason. Although her argument does bear a strong resemblance to that of Leibniz's argument, she takes great care to begin with premises that would be acceptable to her contemporaries who were largely Cartesians or Lockeans. In doing so, she makes it more likely that her readers will accept her argument. In addition, by beginning with Descartes' Cogito and arguing that it is based on the principle of non-contradiction, she paves the way for a greater acceptance of Leibniz's two great principles.

1.5 Mary Shepherd's Cosmological Argument

Mary Shepherd (1777-1847) was born not far from Edinburg and developed philosophical interests during her education with a private tutor. She was involved in public philosophical debates about causation where she defended realism, and she also published essays concerning the ill effects of idealism. In her work, *An Essay on the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy as Applied by Mr. Hume to the Perception of External Existence*, Mary Shepherd argues against David Hume's skeptical arguments regarding cause and effect and our knowledge of external independent existences – things in the external world that exist independently of our minds.[32] Her aim in defeating these skeptical arguments is to preserve the causal maxim, *it is necessary that whatever begins to exist has a cause,* and to show that we can know that external independent entities exist.[33] In addition to the worry that skepticism led to idealism, Shepherd thought it led to atheism by undermining our best arguments for the existence of God – cosmological arguments.

Shepherd supplies her argument for the existence of God in Chapter VII of the *Essay*. Her argument is an application of the argument made in previous chapters of the book designed to show that we can know external independent entities exist. She tells us that once we consider the whole of nature, we will come to the conclusion that there must exist one continuous intelligent being that is the cause of all the changes we perceive in nature. Shepherd states the argument as follows:

> For after some contemplation upon the phenomena of nature, we conclude, that in order to account for the facts we perceive, 'there must needs be' one continuous existence, one uninterrupted essentially existing cause, one intelligent being, 'every ready to appear' as the renovating power for all the dependent effects, all the secondary causes beneath our view. To devout minds, the notion becomes

> familiar and clear; and being mixed with the *sensible impressions* of goodness, wisdom, and power, begets those habitual sentiments of fear, trust, and love, which it is reasonable to perceive and to enjoy. Our constantly familiar friend, whose presence we speak of, and whose qualities we love and admire, affords us no further proof for his existence and his qualities, than the reasoning adduced in this book: -- He must needs be another being than ourselves, having qualities which are not our own, but *his*, that are sufficient to engage our sympathy, or the relations of our thoughts would be rendered inconsistent with each other. (PWMS, 2:151-2)

This is an intriguing text; however, without an understanding of Shepherd's prior reasoning regarding external entities, this argument is unintelligible. So, we must come to understand what Shepherd means when she claims that it is through the contemplation of nature that we see there must be one continuously existing independent mind that is the cause of all we perceive. We will begin by considering her argument for the existence of independent external objects in general, then we can return to the cosmological argument.

A quick overview of Shepherd's argument goes as follows. In her work, *An Essay Upon the Relation of Cause and Effect*, Shepherd argues, contra Hume, that reason can lead us to, and give us knowledge of, the causal maxim *it is necessary that whatever begins to exist has a cause*. Her defense of the causal maxim is as follows:

> The idea is very soon learned, *that it is a contradiction to suppose things to Begin of themselves*; for this idea is occasioned by the impression, (the observation,) that the *beginning* of every thing is but a change of that which is already in existence, and so is not the same idea, (the same quality,) as the *beginning of being*, which is

> independent of previous being and its changes. The two ideas are therefore *contrary* to each other; …*Changes* therefore require beings already in existence, of which they are the affections or qualities;…The mind therefore taking notice of changes, refers them to objects of which they are the qualities. (PWMS, 2:170-171)

According to Shepherd, the causal maxim is used in our latent unconscious reasoning during perception. She holds that 'Qualities cannot *begin* of themselves, and the *union* of qualities or objects is necessary to form a new existence' (PWMS, 2:163). Since it is a contradiction for something to be self-caused, whenever we observe a change (a new quality) we reason that it is a change in some thing already existing. Since all change is an effect, in order for there to be a change in a perception, there must be some *difference* in the cause that underlies this change. The idea that a difference is necessary to cause a change in perception is the basis for holding that *similar causes produce similar effects*.

Shepherd notes that there are three things involved in the production of perceptions: (1) the unknown and unperceived natures, (2) sense organs, and (3) minds or consciousness. Since we understand that the faculties of our sense organs and minds are constant and unchanging, we reason that they are not responsible for the variety of sensations that present themselves to us. According to Shepherd, perception is a process that involves the sense organs being acted upon by the qualities of causes and our minds' conscious and unconscious abilities to reason about and interpret this sensory input that results in the forming of ideas. She writes,

> The perception of external, continually existing, independent objects, is an affair of the understanding; it is a mental vision; the result of some notions previously in the mind, being mixed with each sensation as it arises, and thus enabling it to

> refer the sensations to certain reasonable causes, without resting merely in the contemplation of the sensations themselves…the organs of sense are the instruments which immediately detect the presence of those things which are external to, and independent both of the organs of sense and the mind. (PWMS, 2:168-9)

According to Shepherd, we can differentiate the perceptions that we have of external entities from those of our own mind (dreams or imaginings) because the perceptions of external entities exhibit both the ability to be recalled (as when we turn and look back at a house we have previously seen), and the ability to present changes in their appearances which are not due to any change in our own mind or sensory organs (as when we view a tree from the same position for a period of time and observe the leaves swaying while we remain still). Shepherd says that our sensations exhibit a 'readiness to reappear' (as when we sense a tree, close our eyes, and reopen them to again sense the tree) that cannot be accounted for otherwise than by the continuous existence of independent entities. Shepherd holds, however, the external objects themselves are not perceived. We have no direct knowledge of them. We only know that something must exist to account for our various sensations. She believes that we are in direct contact with external objects (causal realism), but that the properties of the objects we are affected by are unknowable in themselves (apart from the way our sense organs and minds process them). Yet, she believes that there is some resemblance between our qualitative experiences of objects and the mechanical properties of the objects. Shepherd maintains that the patterns of our sensations are 'algebraic signs' of the objects they represent.

Shepherd thinks we know that some of the external existing objects we perceive are minds like our own. She argues that when we sense, we perceive ourselves as a continually

existing mind that is independent of all else. When we perceive others who seem to exhibit the capacity for sensation as we do (although we do not sense what they sense), we infer that they are an existent like ourselves. That is, we perceive them as continually existing independent minds. Although this argument does to some extent rely on analogy, it is at heart a causal argument. We perceive a variety of sensations that we know are not from ourselves and we reason that these sensations must have causes. Since the sensations we receive seem to be of existents manifesting behavior very much like our own behavior (behavior we know in our own case is caused by our minds), we infer that the cause of these sensations is something with a mind like our own.

We can now return to the argument for God's existence. Just as we know from the change in qualities we perceive in the world that there are underlying externally existing causes of these qualities (entities, minds), according to Shepherd, we can know of the existence of God as the continuing independent existing cause of all that is perceivable. Shepherd's argument begins with the claim that when we consider the whole of nature (not just everything we perceive, but everything that any mind perceives or can perceive), we understand that there must be some underlying existence that can account for all the change in the world. Since everything perceived in the world is constantly changing, our minds naturally infer that there must be some underlying cause of all this change. Thus, we infer that there is something external to the changes we perceive that is the cause of all change. Moreover, since we perceive the qualities of goodness, wisdom, and power in the world, which are mental qualities, we can know that the underlying external cause must be a mind or intelligent, being similar to ourselves, yet capable of causing all the good, wisdom, and power we see. Shepherd argues that if there were no such cause, then 'the relations of our thoughts would be rendered inconsistent.' However, one might

wonder why we should think that there is one continuous eternal entity rather than just the many entities of which we have sensations. Shepherd addresses this worry explicitly in *Essay XI: On the Immateriality of Mind* (PWMS, 2:386-92). There she writes,

> Let it not be retorted, that it is easier to conceive of all the little changing beings we know of, as existing without a creator than of such a being; the one side of the dilemma involves a contradiction, the other does not; the one is to imagine the existence of a series of dependent effects without a continuous being of which they are the qualites, and is equal to the supposition of the possibility of every thing spring up as we see it, from an absolute blank and nonentity of existence; the other is the result of referring like effects to like causes.…to believe in the infinite universe of mind, matter, space, and motion, eternally and necessarily existing: generating the creation of all minor existences in every form and kind that is possible, through the rounds of ceaseless time. (PWMS, 2:391-2).

Here, Shepherd claims that there must be an underlying eternal and necessary external first cause of all that we see.[34] However, this passage is intriguing because it suggests something more about Shepherd's conception of God and about the strength of the analogy between her argument for the existence of external entities and her argument for the existence of God. Shepherd cautions against thinking that there is an infinite chain of finite or dependent beings when she writes, 'the one is to imagine the existence of a series of dependent effects without a continuous being of which they are the qualities.' But the suggestion that dependent beings are qualities of God seems to indicate that Shepherd might hold that finite beings are properties of God. Thus, just as we infer the existence of continuously existing finite beings from the changes in their qualities, we infer the existence of an essentially existing being from its qualities – finite beings.

In the last sentence of the quote above, Shepherd claims that the underlying cause of the world is like the qualities of mind, but also 'matter, space, and motion' which generates 'minor existences in every form and kind that is possible.' Here again the description seems to indicate that God is the substance underlying the changes in the world in a rather Spinozistic sense – God is the cause of the changes in minds, matter, space, and motion because they are parts of him.

Mary Shepherd's argument for the existence of God is unique in form since it depends on her own unique arguments for the existence of external continually existing independent entities. Her overall philosophical project of providing a theory of ideas that avoids skepticism about causation and the external world is manifest in this argument. However, the underlying structure of her argument is common to all cosmological arguments in that she is demonstrating the originating cause of some aspect of the world -- in her case, the underlying substance that is the cause of changes in the whole of the world.

1.6 Concluding Remarks

We have seen unique cosmological arguments for the existence of God as provided by Mary Astell, Damaris Masham, Emilie Du Châtelet, and Mary Shepherd, a defense of the causal maxim by Mary Shepherd, and a defense of the concepts of necessary existence and the principle of sufficient reason by Catherine Trotter Cockburn. I hope that it is clear that not only did early modern women philosophers contribute to the philosophical literature on the cosmological argument, but that they made significant and interesting contributions. Their arguments are original and they were involved in the contemporary debates of their times – often responding to criticisms of, and weaknesses in, previous arguments. Moreover, they mounted sophisticated defenses of key aspects of the arguments that they wished to promote. It is true that these arguments have largely been left out of our historical accounts. Most books and articles on the

cosmological argument do not include them. However, it is unclear why this is so given the level of philosophical sophistication of their arguments and the insights they make into the surrounding controversies. I hope that this chapter will be a first step towards rectifying this error.

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[1] For a discussion of the failure to include these women in our philosophical histories more generally, see Eileen O'Neill's 'Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and their Fate in History,' in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*, ed. Janet A Kourney (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 17- 62. Also see, Margaret Atherton's 'Reading Lady Mary Shepherd' in *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* 13(2) 2005: 73 -85.

[2] For recent examples, Daniel Garber's 'Canons and Counter-Canons: Thoughts on the Historiography of the History of Philosophy,' Central Division APA, Chicago, February 2012, and Robert Pasnau's 'Philosophical Beauty', Central Division APA, Chicago, February 12, 2012. Online at http://spot.colorado.edu/~pasnau/inprint/pasnau.beauty.pdf

[3] For a discussion of arguments for the existence of God in the 17th century, see the author's 'Arguments for the Existence of God,' *The Routledge Companion to the Seventeenth-Century*, ed. Daniel Kaufman, (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

[4] Astell also presents a cosmological argument (although of a different sort) in *Bart'lemy Fair*, 117.

[5] For a further discussion of Astell's arguments for God's existence and her views on his nature see the author's 'Mary Astell on the Existence and Nature of God' in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Astell*, eds. Alice Sowaal and Penny Weiss (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, forthcoming).

[6] Descartes' two versions of the cosmological argument are in the Third Meditation (AT VII 45-51/CSM 31-35) and the ontological argument is in the Fifth Meditation (AT VII 65-66/CSM 45-46).

[7] Locke's objections apply to both the ontological argument and the cosmological argument that concerns the cause of our idea of God. It is not clear whether Locke recognized the second cosmological argument in the Third Meditation, which does not rely on our idea of God, but instead focuses on the first cause of our existence and continual preservation.

[8] Astell, SP II, 180. Notice the similarity to Locke: "The idea of thinking in ourselves, which we receive by reflection, we may, by intermediate ideas, perceive to have a necessary agreement and connexion with the idea of the existence of an eternal, thinking being." Locke, *Works*, Vol. III, p. 60.

[9] It should be noted here that Astell's use the idea of particular beings versus being in general is reminiscent of Malebranche's views, which Astell knew from her association and correspondence with John Norris.

[10] Here, we might see another concession to Locke. Locke denies "everything has a cause" is a principle of reason. Rather, Locke thinks that our experience teaches us that all things that have a *beginning* must have a cause. See, Locke, *Works*, Vol. III, p. 61.

[11] Masham's arguments are in DLG, 62-65, and OT, 60-63.

[12] For excellent discussions of Masham's relation to Astell see James G Buickerood's 'What Is It with Damaris, Lady Masham? The Historiography of One Early Modern Woman Philosopher,' in *Locke Studies: An Annual Journal Of Locke Research* 5 2005: 179-214 and Jacqueline Broad's 'Adversaries or Allies? Occasional Thoughts on the Masham-Astell Exchange,' in *Eighteenth-Century Thought* 1 2003: 123-49, and Catherine Wilson's 'Love of God and Love of Creatures: The Masham-Astell Debate,' in *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 21(3) 2004: 281-98.

[13] Norris was apparently not a full occasionalist, like Malebranche, for Norris held that bodies do have the power to cause impressions on other bodies; however, bodies do not have the power to cause sensations in the mind. The impressions bodies make on other bodies are the mere occasions for God to cause sensations in the mind. I am indebted to Eileen O'Neill for pointing out this distinction.

[14] It should be noted that Masham, like Locke, thinks that we can have knowledge and certainty of probabilistic claims. Since most of our knowledge claims are based on empirical evidence, we cannot have Cartesian certainty – that is, we cannot have indubitable certainty – however, both Locke and Masham think this is an unreasonable standard for knowledge. Masham's arguments for the existence of God and his unity might be unsatisfying to those who do not accept that all our ideas must be based in experience. It is interesting to note that Locke's argument in the *Essay* has the same problem concerning the unity of God, and that when pushed Locke provided three proofs for the unity of God, all of which rely on God's perfections. See Locke's February 21, 1698 letter to van Limborch.

[15] Catherine Trotter Cockburn, *Remarks upon some Writers in the Controversy concerning the Foundation of Moral Virtue and Moral Obligation; particularly the Translator of Archbishop King's Origin of Evil, and the author of the Divine Legation of Moses*, (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1743). Reprinted in *The Works of Catherine Cockburn, Theological, Moral, Dramatic, and Poetical*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for J. and P. Knapton, 1751) Reprinted (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1992). Volume 1, p. 380-450. Modern Edition, *Catherine Trotter Cockburn: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Patricia Sheridan (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006), 87-146. Future References will be to the Modern Edition and abbreviated CTCPW followed by page number. For Clark's original argument see Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and Other Writings*, ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[16] '…it arises either from the relation which the existence of that thing of which it is affirmed has to the existence of *other things*; or from the relation which the existence of that thing has to the *manner of its own* existence. In the former signification, when necessity of existence has relation to the existence of other things, it denotes that the supposition of the non-existence of that thing of which necessity is affirmed, implies the non-existence of things which we know to exist. Thus some independent being does *necessarily exist*; because to suppose no independent being implies that *there are no dependent beings*, the contrary of which we know to be true; so that necessity of existence in this sense, is nothing else but necessity of truth as related to consequential truth. And this sort of proof is called *demonstratio a posteriori*.' Edmund Law, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil by Dr. William King, Late Lord Archbishop of Dublin. Translated from the Latin, with Notes.* (London: Printed for R. Faulder, New Bond Street, and T. and J. Merril, Cambridge, 1732), Section II, Page 18, Note 4.

[17] 'When the necessity of existence arises from the relation which the existence of any thing has to the *manner* of its own existence, then necessity means that that thing of which it is affirmed exists after such a manner that it never could have not existed.' Law, *An Essay*, Section II, Page 18, Note 4.

[18] 'We can therefore only prove his existence *a posteriori* and argue from the manner of it in a *negative* way. From the order of causes we gather that he must necessarily have been from all eternity, otherwise his existence would have arose from nothing; and that he must continue to all eternity, otherwise an end would be put to that existence by nothing. But this is still only a *consequential* necessity arising from the absurdity which would attend the contrary suppositions, and to infer any thing from hence concerning the *modus* of the Divine Being seems to be building a great deal more on this argument than it will bear. This is indeed a *reason* by which we find that he must always exist, but it is a reason to *us* only, and does not affect *his* own nature, or the cause of it, and when it is applied to that, I think 'tis used equivocally. Conceiving that he cannot possibly be supposed not to exist, is far from conceiving *how* or *why* he actually *does exist*.' Law, *An Essay*, Section II, Page 57, Remark E.

[19] Law, *An Essay*, Section II, Page 59, Remark E.

[20] Therefore for them that were once indifferent to existence or non-existence, to be actually determined into existence, to be brought from nothing into something, or made what they once were not; is a real change, an action, an effect; and as such must require some changer, agent, cause. But on the other hand, all that we know of this one being, is, that it now exists and always did so; that it never had a beginning of its existence, was never changed from what it is, never made or produced: here is no effect, and therefore no reason nor room for a ground or cause of it.

Law, *An Essay*, Section II, Page 58, Remark E. This view is similar to Locke's view on cause and effect.

[21] It should be noted that Leibniz held that a necessary being carries his own reason within him. This is similar to Clarke's contention that the reason for the independent being's existence is in his essence.

[22] Du Châtelet, Gabrielle-Emilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil Marquise, *Institutions physiques*, nouvelle edition (1742) in Christian Wolff *Gesammelte Werke Materialien und Dockumente*, Band 28, (George Olms Verlag: Hildesheim, 1988). There is no complete English translation of the *Institutions*. However, a substantial amount of the philosophical chapters are translated in *Emilie Du Châtelet: Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, ed. Judith Zinsser, trans. Isabelle Bour and Judith Zinsser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Subsequent references to this work will be abbreviated IP followed by section number.

[23] Her translation and commentary on Newton's Principia was published posthumously as *Principles mathématiques de la philosophie naturelle par feue madame la marquie Du Chastelet* (Paris: Desaint et Sallant, 1759) 2 vols.

[24] For an excellent overview of the structure of, and influences on, the *Institutions* see Linda Gardiner Janik, 'Searching for the Metaphysics of Science: the Structure and Composition of Madame Du Châtelet's *Institutions de physique* 1737-1740,' *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 201(1982): 85-113.

[25] Her intense study of Leibniz was greatly aided by her math tutor, Samuel Köenig

[26] For a further discussion of Du Châtelet's views on God's existence and nature see my article 'Emilie du Châtelet on the Existence and Nature of God: An examination of her arguments in light of their sources,' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19 (4) 2011: 741-758.

[27] Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). References to the *Essay* are cited by book, chapter, and section, followed by a page number to this edition. It should be noted that Descartes also gives a cosmological argument that seeks the cause of his existence at AT VII 45-51/CSM 31-35.

[28] Leibniz, *Essais de Theodicee* in *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin: Weidman, 1875-1890), Vol. VI, 106-7. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965. Translation, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrar, trans. E.M. Huggard (La Salle, Il: Open Court, 1952), 127. I should also note that Samuel Clarke's argument for the existence of God, which du Châtelet might have been familiar with as well, also begins with the claim that something exists. See *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and Other Writings*, ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 8-10.

[29] Jerrold Katz claims that no formal contradiction can be had in such cases, and so the Cogito does not rely on the principle of non-contradiction. See Katz's *Cogitations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, and Gareth Matthews' 'Descartes's "Cogito" and Katz's "Cogitations,"' in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 68 1987: 197-204.

[30] It should be noted that Descartes also accepts this principle and that some have argued that it is this causal principle that is at work in his ontological argument, rather than the more controversial containment principle i.e., the cause must have at least as much reality as the effect. See Alan Nelson and Larry Nolan, 'Proofs for the Existence of God' in *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*, ed. Stephen Gaukroger (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 104-121.

[31] For further contemporary criticisms of Locke's proof see Jonathan Bennett, 'God and Matter in Locke: An Exposition of Essay 4.10,' in *Early Modern Philosophy: Mind, Matter, and Metaphysics*, eds. Christia Mercer and Eileen O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162; Nicolas Wolterstorf, 'Locke's Philosophy of Religion,' in the *Cambridge Companion to Locke*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge, 1994), 189; and Michael Ayers, *Locke: Epistemology & Ontology* (London: Routledge, 1991), 182.

[32] Mary Shepherd, *Philosophical Works of Lady Mary Shepherd*, ed. Jennifer McRobert, 2 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2000). Hereafter referred to as PWMS followed by volume and page number. For a discussion of the accuracy of Shepherd's readings of Berkley, and to some extent Hume, see Margaret Atherton's 'Lady Mary Shepherd's Case Against George Berkeley,' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* vol. 4 no. 2 (1996): 347-366.

[33] For more on Mary Shepherd's criticisms of Hume, and her own positive account of cause and effect see Martha Brandt Bolton's 'Lady Mary Shepherd and David Hume on Cause and Effect,' this volume, Chapter 4.

[34] In other passages, Shepherd claims that the capacity for change must always exist, and that this capacity must have its origin in some being which does not change and does not begin (PWMS, 2:39).