

Theme 1 - Arguments for the existence of God

- The word philosophy comes from the Greek 'philo' and 'sophos', which mean love and wisdom.
- Philosophy is the academic search for truth, reality and the nature of existence.
- The philosophy of religion analyses the central concepts, beliefs and teachings relating to religion.
- Philosophical arguments consist of a series of premises that lead towards a conclusion.
- **To be successful, the premises and the conclusion need to be both valid and sound (see box).**
- **Valid** The conclusion logically follows from the preceding premises without any gaps in reasoning during the premises or any unexplained new information in the conclusion.
- **Sound** The information in the premises must be accurate, and the logical process must be a valid one.

Argument 1: Valid and sound	Argument 2: Not valid or sound
P1- I was born in Littlehampton. P2- Littlehampton is on the Sussex coast. C- Therefore, I was born on the Sussex coast.	P2- I was born in Littlehampton. P2- Littlehampton is on the Scottish coast. C- Therefore, my birth certificate says Scotland on it.

In argument 1, the premises are accurate and the conclusion follows logically. In argument 2, the second premise is faulty, so the argument is not sound. It also introduces information into the conclusion that is not supported in the premises, so the argument is not valid.

Background knowledge

Mr Shah feels you need to understand the following concepts before looking into the Cosmological Argument(s). Make notes as he goes through them.

Concept of God as Transcendent (not anthropomorphic):

Space is a thing:

The Big Bang theory:

Infinite regress:

The **cosmological and teleological** arguments are both **inductive proofs** for God's existence. This means they offer arguments that may be both valid and sound yet do not give an indisputable conclusion.

An **inductive argument** gives a conclusion that is one of **several possibilities**. For example, 'I sneezed, therefore I have a cold' is inductive. It is reasonable to assume that my sneeze could be caused by a cold, but there are other possible causes such as hay fever, other allergies or flu.

The concept of **a posteriori** - The **cosmological and teleological** arguments are both a **posteriori proofs**. This means that they arrive at their conclusions after having evaluated empirical data. The cosmological argument **relies upon the empirical data of the cosmos** and the phenomena within it to come to its conclusions.

Notes

Cosmological argument: St Thomas Aquinas' first three Ways

Who was St Thomas Aquinas? Aquinas (c.1225–74) **was an Italian, Roman Catholic, Dominican monk**. He was **impressed by the work of the ancient Greek scholar Aristotle** and applied his empiricist style of reason to Christianity.

Aquinas' Five Ways from his work Summa Theologica were logical arguments regarding the existence of God. **The first three Ways offer an a posteriori cosmological arguments for God's existence, drawing upon Aristotelian reasoning.**

Motion or change

Aquinas' First Way concerns motion. **By motion, Aquinas means the process of change from one state (actuality) to another state (potentiality) .**

In Aquinas' example, the actuality of wood is to be cold, but its potentiality is to become hot. To achieve its potentiality, it is moved by something else that is actually hot. Fire moves the wood towards its potentiality, which becomes its actuality once it is burning. This is the process of motion.

The First Way

- Some things in the world are in motion.
- A thing in motion must be moved by something else (a mover).
- The chain of movement cannot infinitely go back in time (infinite regress). SEE NOTES BOX
- Therefore, there must be a first mover, unmoved by anything else (a prime mover or unmoved mover).

Cause and effect

Aquinas' Second Way is similar but **more concerned with cause and effect**. This is different because it concerns how things come into existence rather than how they change states and acquire different properties.

The Second Way

- Everything that exists has been created – it has an efficient cause.
- Nothing can cause itself.
- There is no such thing as infinite regress. SEE NOTES BOX
- Therefore, there must be an uncaused first causer.

At this stage, the prime mover or causer need not be the God of classical theism with its belief in the existence of one supreme deity. **The argument only proves logically that there must be an initial uncaused causer or unmoved mover.**

Notes

Way one Infinite regress: If all participants give a property/quality and this goes on forever, it means that property/quality does not exist. Give examples of Red ball and paint.

Way two Infinite regress: Nothing can cause itself and needs an 'efficient cause'. In order of causes even 'efficient causes' are 'effects' of other causes. We know that all causal chains need an efficient cause, so the order of all causes needs a primary/ first efficient cause that is uncaused.

Use domino example.

Contingency and necessity

Aquinas' Third Way has a priori elements because it talks about the nature of existence and **relies less on empirical knowledge.**

The Third Way

- There are contingent items.
- If everything were contingent then nothing would exist at all, as contingent things need a cause.
- Infinite regress of contingent items is impossible.
- Therefore, not all things are contingent.
- There must be a necessary being to start off the chain of contingency.
- That necessary being is God.

Everything in this world is contingent because it is all dependent upon something else to be here. We cannot witness a necessary being, but logically Aquinas shows that there must be one. If all things were contingent they would go out of existence and there would be nothing in existence.

Notes

The Kalam cosmological argument

The Kalam argument is also Aristotelian. It was developed by Islamic scholars (e.g. Al Ghazali) from around the ninth century CE and popularised by William Lane Craig in 1979. Kalam is an Arabic word that means 'argue' or 'discuss'.

The Kalam argument states that:

- Things that begin to exist have a cause.
- The universe began to exist.
- The universe must have a cause.

However, this begs the question of whether the universe did begin to exist. Couldn't it be infinite and have existed forever?

Craig's argument comes in two stages and attempts to prove that the universe is not infinite, and the first cause must be a personal God.

Who is William Lane Craig? William Lane Craig (1949–present) is an American, Christian theologian and analytic philosopher. He has publicly debated Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens. Craig argues that it is not possible that the universe is infinite, because infinity is not logically possible.

Part one of the Kalam argument: Whatever begins to exist has a cause

- An actual infinite universe cannot consist of a series of consecutive events; this is not infinite.
- An actual infinite universe would never reach the present moment because the preceding events would be infinite.
- The present moment does exist because of a series of consecutive events.
- The universe is not infinite, so it must be finite.
- Finite things begin, and everything that begins is caused to do so (nothing can cause itself).
- The universe was caused to exist.

Notes

Successive addition- One thing added to a chain of events (e.g. time). Craig says this is not actually infinite.

Actual infinite found in set theory. Not growing but always been infinite. For Craig (and Kalam proponents) this 'actual infinite' is logically possible, but paradoxical in reality (meta-physically). See examples below.

Note: Big Bang also shows the universe 'began' to exist

Rejection of actual infinities

Set theory studies the classification of items into groups or sets. For example, a set of books would contain all books within it. A set of sets would contain within it all sets. We could then count how many sets there are.

Set theory asks if there could be an infinite set? An infinite set would need to contain an infinite number of items, but this leads to many logical problems:

- To add to or subtract from an infinite set would mean it isn't infinite.
- Half an infinite set is equal to the whole, so it cannot be subdivided.
- So, some mathematicians and philosophers have suggested actual infinities are illogical and thus impossible. Consecutively adding items to a set with the potential to carry on forever is called successive addition. A set formed through successive addition is known as a potential infinite.
- A potential infinite is not actually infinite.

Notes

Give other examples: Hilbert hotel and Al Ghazali's planetary motions.

Part two of the Kalam argument: Concept of a personal creator

- The universe was caused to exist.
- It was **either caused deliberately or by mindless laws of nature.**
- The **laws of nature cannot have caused the universe as they belong to it and didn't exist before it began.**
- The universe must have been caused deliberately.
- **Deliberate action requires a personal being with a will.**
- If the universe was created from nothing, then the beginning of the universe was the beginning of time.
- Therefore, a personal being exists outside of the universe and time as the first cause of it all.

Here we have a being who has many of the qualities of the theistic God – this being must be transcendent, the cause of the universe, powerful, sentient and intelligent.

Notes

1C Challenges to inductive arguments

David Hume's challenges

Who was David Hume? **David Hume (1711–76) was a Scottish empiricist philosopher** who made an extensive contribution to philosophy. He was a sceptic who critiqued the cosmological and teleological arguments in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779).

	Cosmological claim	Humes Challenge
1	Every effect has a cause	Cause and effect may be an assumption , not a reality.
2	The universe must have a cause	What is true of the parts needs not be true of the whole
3	The Cause is God	This need to be the God theism
4	There is evidence that God exists	We cannot know how/whether the universe began

1 Every effect has a cause

Hume challenges this for being an assumption not a fact. When two events happen consecutively, we habitually interpret some as causes and others as effects. Hume argues that this connection may be erroneous. **We use our imagination to connect the two events**, but this is insufficient to make the claim that one causes the other. 'If we believe that fire warms or water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pain to think otherwise.'

2 The universe must have a cause

Just because there are causes within the universe does not mean that the universe itself was caused. To assume this is the **fallacy of composition**. This means to perceive a quality in parts of the universe and apply that to the whole – for example, atoms are very small, therefore everything made up of atoms must be very small – which is a failure of reasoning. But why assume that the universe even began? **Hume argues that the universe may be infinite**. An infinite item does not require a cause. If we apply Ockham's razor, that out of multiple possibilities the simplest explanation is most likely to be correct, then the simplest explanation is that the universe was uncaused and infinite, or that it was its own cause.

Notes

Does Hume have an outdated understanding of science?

3 The cause is God

If the universe was caused by God, **there is no requirement for that to be the God of classical theism**. A first cause is not necessarily going to be benevolent, personal and intelligent.

4 There is evidence that God exists

Since we were not there, we cannot know if the universe began or was caused. There is insufficient evidence, so it is not possible to talk meaningfully about **God creating universes since we have no experience of it**.

Notes

Does Hume have an outdated understanding of science?