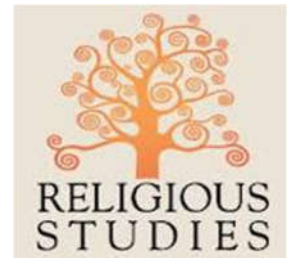


2017



Summer Preparation Work



Philosophy of Religion

Theme 1

Arguments for the existence of God



Summer Preparation Work – watch the videos first

The Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God

'A may be explained by B, and B by C, but in the end there will be some one object on whom all other objects depend. We will have to acknowledge something as ultimate – the great metaphysical issue is what that is' **Richard Swinburne, 1996**

The Cosmological Argument is an **umbrella** term for a series of arguments about the cause of the universe. It comes from the Greek *cosmos* meaning world/universe. This **inductive (see introductory activities) and a posteriori** argument allows us to locate God outside of the universe and offers an explanation for the universe itself.

The Cosmological Argument is based on our experience that everything has a cause – a posteriori.

It moves on to the assumption that the universe must have a first cause – a priori.

It addresses the question, why is there a universe rather than nothing at all? The universe exists, so what caused it? How did it come about?

The argument is based on the claim that everything existing in the universe exists because it was **caused** by something else; that 'something' was itself also caused by something else. However, it is necessary for something to have started this all off.

That something must be located outside of the universe, it must be an **external cause**. That external cause was not itself caused or created and moreover doesn't even need an explanation. That 'external cause' is **God**. God doesn't need an explanation, nor does He have a cause, because God is His own cause - **His existence is necessary**.



St Thomas Aquinas developed three cosmological arguments

A posteriori – On the basis of experience; used of an argument, such as the cosmological argument, which is based on experience or empirical evidence

A priori – Without or prior to experience; used of an argument, such as the ontological argument, which is based on acquired knowledge independent of or prior to experience

Inductive proof – Argument constructed on possibly true premises reaching a logically possible and persuasive conclusion

The cosmological argument of Aquinas -

St Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) wrote his most significant work, the *Summa Theologica* or ‘summary of Theology’, in a form common to treatises (a written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject) of that age. All theology is divided into its major topics. These, in turn, are divided into subtopics described by Aquinas as ‘questions’. The first question in the *Summa Theologica* deals with the nature of theology itself, and the second with God’s existence. These questions are divided into ‘articles’, which are specific queries concerning the topic being explored in that particular question. To the modern reader, the questions are more like general topics and the articles more like questions.

The first way – motion and change – can be summarised like this:

- Everything that moves is moved by something else, as nothing can move itself, since nothing can be both mover and moved and yet things are evidently in motion,
- The chain however cannot be infinite, as an infinite chain of movers that has no beginning can have not successive or ultimate movers
- Therefore there must be a first mover that cause motion in all things
- This we call God

According to Aquinas who was the Unmoved mover?

*It must be said that God’s existence can be proved in five ways. The first and most obvious way is based on the **existence of motion**. It is certain and in fact evident to our senses that some things in the world are moved. Everything that is moved, however, is moved by something else, for a thing cannot be moved unless that movement is potentially within it. A thing moves something else insofar as it actually exists, **for to move something is simply to actualise what is potentially within that thing**. Something can be led thus from potentiality to actuality only by something else which is already actualised.*



For example, **a fire, which is actually hot causes**

~~the change or motion whereby wood, which is potentially hot, becomes actually hot. Now it is impossible that something should be potentially and actually the same thing at the same time, although it could be potentially and actually different things. For example, what is actually hot cannot at the same moment be actually cold, although it can be actually hot and potentially cold. Therefore it is impossible that a thing could move itself, for that would involve simultaneously moving and being moved in the same respect. Thus whatever is moved must be moved by something, else, etc. This cannot go on to infinity, however, for if it did there would be no first mover and consequently no other movers, because these other movers are such only insofar as they are moved by a first mover. For example, a stick moves only because it is moved by the hand. Thus it is necessary to proceed back to some prime mover which is moved by nothing else, and this is what everyone means by 'God'.~~

1. Write definitions of key terms

Potentiality

Actuality

Efficient cause – the third party that moves potentiality to actuality

Aristotle used the example of a block of marble (potential) becoming a statue (actual) but only when acted upon by the sculptor (efficient cause).



Infinite regress - Aquinas believed that we would not find the first cause of things by simply going further and further back into time ('infinite regress'). He said that there must be a beginning point. J.L. Mackie gave the example that we would not expect a railway train consisting of an infinite number of carriages to move anywhere without an engine. God is like an engine. He is not just another carriage, but the thing that has the power to move without requiring something else to move him.

In his First Way, Aquinas is seeking to prove the existence of God through motion and change.

2. Write an explanation of Aquinas's First Way in your own words, but include direct quotes from Aquinas. Always use examples in your notes and answers- it shows you understand the work and help to satisfy the trigger word 'Explain' in a question – fire and wood, marble and sculptor (research this idea).

When explaining the idea of motion in an essay it is worth remembering that the idea of motion does not necessarily mean movement in terms of velocity and direction; it can mean the motion that an object has as it



changes its state (e.g. H₂O molecules are in motion when heated and change to _____).

In his Second Way (see below), Aquinas is seeking to prove the existence of God through efficient cause and can be summarised as follows:

- Everything has a cause, things cannot cause themselves
- There can't be an infinite number of causes as with an infinite chain there can be no first cause
- Therefore there must be a first cause on which all other things depend
- God

Why does Aquinas claim that the first efficient cause is God?

*The second way is based on the existence of **efficient causality**. We see in the world around us that there is an order of efficient causes. Nor is it ever found (in fact it is impossible) that something is its own efficient cause. If it were, it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Nevertheless, the order of efficient causes cannot proceed to infinity, for in any such order the first is cause of the middle (whether one or many) and the middle of the last. Without the cause, the effect does not follow. Thus, if the first cause did not exist, neither would the middle and last causes in the sequence. If, however, there were an infinite regression of efficient causes, there would be no first efficient cause and therefore no middle causes or final effects, which is obviously not the case. **Thus it is necessary to posit some first efficient cause, which everyone calls 'God'.***

An example – If you imagine a line of dominoes, the first (efficient cause) is the one that causes the second (intermediate cause) one to fall, which in turn causes the third (ultimate cause) one to fall. However, the third one would not have fallen, had the first one not have hit the second one. Aquinas' idea of efficient cause followed by intermediate cause and ending at ultimate cause can seem confusing at first, but, by using the domino analogy it gives a suitable visual expression of the philosophical idea



3. Write an explanation of Aquinas’s Second Way in your own words, but include direct quotes from Aquinas and the domino example – the movement of the dominoes needs a first cause.

In his Third Way (see below), Aquinas is seeking to prove the existence of God through the concepts of contingency/possibility and necessity

- Individual things come into existence and later cease to exist and are dependent on factors beyond themselves
- Therefore – at one time none of them was in existence
- But – something comes into existence only as a result of something else that already exists
- Therefore there must be a being whose existence is necessary on which all things depend,
- God.



Key terms

Contingent: anything that depends on something else (possible)

Necessary: Non-contingent. A necessary being is the source of all existence for all other contingent beings

*The Third Way is based on possibility and necessity. We find that some things can either exist or not exist, for we find them springing up and then disappearing, thus sometimes existing and sometimes not. It is impossible that everything should be such, for what can possibly not exist does not do so at some time. If it is possible for every particular thing not to exist, there must have been a time when nothing at all existed. If this were true then nothing would exist now, for something that does not exist can begin to do so only through something that already exists. Therefore, if there had been a time when nothing existed, then nothing could ever have begun to exist and there would be nothing now, which is clearly false. Therefore all beings cannot be merely possible. There must be one being which is **necessary**. Any necessary being, however, either has or does not have something else as the cause of its necessity. If the former, then there cannot be an infinite series of such causes, any more than there can be an infinite series of efficient causes, as we have seen. Thus we must posit the existence of something which is necessary and owes its necessity to no cause outside itself. That is what everyone calls **'God'**.*



What are humans contingent upon?



Why aren't humans necessary according to Aquinas?

Evaluating the Cosmological Argument.

Complete the table – use video 2 and any other ideas you can research or think of.

Strengths of the Cosmological Argument	Weaknesses of the Cosmological Argument