

Cosmological Argument

<u>Sub-topics</u> • The types of reasoning offered by the argument: inductive, a posteriori, synthetic. • Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason. • Why is there something rather than nothing? Interpretation of experience. • The Kalam Cosmological argument: Whatever begins to exist has a cause. • Aquinas’ Cosmological arguments: from motion, cause and contingency. • The concepts of contingency and necessity. • Debates about infinite regress: going back to infinity without end. • First cause and God as a necessary being. • Strengths and weaknesses of the cosmological argument. Do they offer probability or proof? • Challenges to the concept of necessary existence. • The brute fact argument: the universe is a ‘brute fact’ which has no explanation. • The criticisms of Kant and Hume.	<u>Key words</u> <u>Inductive reasoning:</u> Inductive arguments provide probable support for their conclusion: if the premises are true, the conclusion is probably true. <u>Deductive reasoning:</u> In deductive arguments, the premises offer logical support for the conclusion: if the premises are true, the conclusion is necessarily true. <u>A posteriori:</u> Based on sense-experience, the evidence of our senses. <u>Necessary being:</u> a being which contains within itself the cause of its own existence. <u>Contingent being:</u> a being which is dependent upon another being for its existence. <u>Infinite regress:</u> backwards to infinity without end. <u>Fallacy of composition:</u> where a conclusion about something that is true is based on something that is true about its parts. <u>Aseity:</u> Self-sufficiency, or having an existence originating from and having no source other than itself.	<u>Key scholars</u> Thomas Aquinas. Gottfried Leibniz. William Lane Craig. David Hume. Immanuel Kant.
<u>Possible H/WK/Questions</u> <u>8 mark</u> Explore the principle of sufficient reason in relation to the cosmological argument. Explore the key ideas associated with the Kalam version of the cosmological argument. Explore key ideas of Cosmological Arguments for the existence of God. (2019) <u>12 mark</u> Assess the weaknesses of the cosmological arguments for the existence of God. Assess the claim that it is impossible to prove the existence of God through the use of a posteriori reasoning alone. <u>20 mark</u> Analyse the view that the universe requires a cause and that God is the best explanation. <u>30 mark</u> Evaluate the claim that the cosmological argument fails to prove the existence of God. Evaluate whether a priori or a posteriori arguments are more convincing for the existence of God.	<u>Starting point- Important key facts</u> - The cosmological argument has taken many forms- some inductive, some deductive. The key question at the heart of this argument is ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ - Most cosmological arguments are a posteriori because they depend upon empirical evidence about the universe. - Contingency is a central idea in Cosmological argument; the idea that everything we experience in the world is contingent. - Contingent things do not contain within themselves the reasons for their own existence, but depend upon external causes. <u>Principle of sufficient reason</u> - Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason is central to cosmological arguments. Leibniz asserts that nothing takes place without sufficient reason. By ‘sufficient reason’ Leibniz means a total explanation. Since everything in the world is contingent, in order to have a sufficient reason we have to get back to something which is not contingent and does not depend upon anything else for its own existence. <u>Aquinas’ 3 ways</u> - In his <i>Summa Theologica</i> Aquinas offered 5 ways of demonstrating God’s existence. The first three of these ways are cosmological arguments: from motion, from cause, and from contingency. - 1. Motion: Begins with an observation that there are things in the universe that are in motion, nothing can move/change itself- it must be moved by something else, an infinite regress is impossible, there must be a first mover/prime mover. - 2. Efficient causation: Begins from observation that in the world there is a series of efficient cause, all events are caused and nothing can be its own cause, there cannot be an infinite regress, must be a first cause of the whole sequence on which all other causes depend, Uncaused causer is God. - 3. Contingency: <u>Kalam cosmological argument</u> - The Kalam cosmological argument has its roots in Islamic scholasticism, and has a modern-day proponent in the person of Professor William Lane Craig. It is a deductive argument, arguing from the general premise ‘whatever begins to exist’ to the particular (the universe). - Whatever begins to exist has a cause, the universe began to exist, the universe must have a cause, the cause is God. <u>Points of debate in Cosmological argument</u>	
<u>Stretch and challenge/Suggested further reading</u> All available on Microsoft teams Richard Swinburne, ‘Is there a God’? Chapters 2 and 4. John Hick, ‘Philosophy of Religion’. Brian Davies, ‘An introduction to the philosophy of religion’. Chapter 3. Peter Vardy, ‘The Puzzle of God’, Chapter 7 https://philosophydungeon.weebly.com/cosmological-argument.html https://iep.utm.edu/religion/#SH4b		

- In *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), David Hume argues that we have no direct experience of the creation of the universe and therefore we cannot speak meaningfully about it.
- Hume dismisses the principle of sufficient reason. Those seeking a complete explanation of the universe are looking for something which cannot be found.
- Immanuel Kant argues that because our knowledge of the world is limited to the phenomenal world of space and time it is not possible to speculate on what may or may not exist independently of space and time.