

i) Outline the cosmological argument for the existence of God. (20)

The cosmological argument, also known as the first cause argument, is an a posteriori argument. This means that the evidence used to prove the argument can be observed by anyone which makes the argument more accessible and user friendly. The argument is also inductive which means that it can have many possible conclusions; not necessarily God. The cosmological argument is a strong argument which tries to infer the existence of God through cause and effect; it's based upon the principle that everything must have been caused by something in order to exist, and that the First Cause which caused all the other causes is God. Cole says that "the cosmological argument attempts to infer the existence of God from the existence of the cosmos or from phenomena within it. The claim is that the universe cannot account for its own existence."

The main weakness of the argument is causation because Hume argues that because no one has actually experienced the cause of the universe, it is beyond human understanding and so it's impossible and pointless to compare our own experiences of the causation of events to the causation of the universe. There are many weaknesses to the cosmological argument which appear to outweigh the strengths. These weaknesses challenge the whole argument such as the logic of the argument and modern scientists have added their own opinions which say that the universe doesn't have to have had a first cause in order to exist. However as part of the cumulative argument for the existence of God, the cosmological argument can be used to strengthen a belief in God. Although the argument fails to prove that God does exist, it also fails to prove that God doesn't exist.

i)

By far, the most important key feature of the cosmological argument is the principle of cause and effect. Cause and effect is an important feature of the cosmological argument because it suggests the existence of an "uncaused causer" i.e. the first cause, which can be concluded to be God. Two of the earliest supporters of the argument are Plato and Aristotle who both argue that "nothing comes out of nothing" [King Lear.] Their ideas influenced later scholars such as Sir Thomas Aquinas who published five ways which he believed proved the existence of God. The first of Aquinas' five ways is that of motion, in which he argues that nothing can move itself, yet things are in fact in motion and so "it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, moved by no other, and this everyone understand to be God." He also said that motion was the "reduction from potentiality to actuality." He used to example of wood in

heat to demonstrate this, saying that the fire would change the wood from being potentially hot to actually hot and so concluded that nothing could be both potential and actual at the same time, so something must be used to bring about the change or transition from potentiality to actuality. Aquinas said that the world is in a constant process of change or motion, and that these changes are the result of previous changes. This makes the first of Aquinas' five ways important, because if you are a supporter of this argument you can say that God is the initiator of change and motion, concluding that God is the first cause.

Another important feature of the cosmological argument is the second of Aquinas' ways. In this way, he argues that while all events are triggered by other events happening, God is not. This makes the second way important because it means that all other events are caused by an uncaused causer, which one can argue to be God. Aquinas argued that the world is made up of a series of events which are caused by other events, and equally cause other events. He furthered this argument by saying that it's logically impossible for an event to cause itself because in order to do that it would have had to precede itself. He said that there must be a first cause from which all other causes are created from and are dependant on. This cause would have to be uncaused, and he concluded from there that the uncaused causer must be God. Aquinas said that "The first efficient cause is the cause of the intermediate cause...it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause to which everyone gives the name God." The second way is also important because of its influence. Many scholars support the cosmological argument and use Aquinas' second way as a basis for their own arguments. One argument that has been produced using Aquinas' second way as a basis is the Kalam argument which was originally put forward by Muslim scholars, and has since been translated and revived by Craig who said that "the cause of the universe is a personal being...who freely chooses to create the world." This is important because he's saying that there must have been an external, personal agent existing outside of time for creation to start.

Another key feature of the cosmological argument is rejection of infinite regression. Tyler and Reid said that "a key element is the regression of infinite regress as unable to provide logically a complete explanation." This is an important feature because if infinite regression wasn't accepted, then the cosmological argument would be undermined because there would be no need for a first cause to trigger off all other causes. Infinite regression is the challenging of the first premise of the cosmological argument, that

everything has a cause. Most scholars reject infinite regress, including Craig and Aquinas who said that actual infinite is illogical. Actual infinite is a mathematical concept of having an infinite number where nothing can be added or subtracted from it. Craig argued that actual infinite is illogical because in order to have arrived at the present day, a finite length of time must have passed. Copleston also rejected infinite regression, saying that a chain of contingent beings could never have brought themselves into existence and so something must have brought them into existence i.e. God.

Contingency is another important feature of the cosmological argument. It argues that everything in the universe has the potential to not exist, and so they must have not existed at one point. Aquinas stated in his third way that because all beings are contingent, "at one time there was nothing in existence." This is important because it means that not all beings are contingent, and that there must be a being which has independence from the other contingent beings in order to cause their existence.

Another important feature of the cosmological argument is the idea of causation. Swinburne stated that there are two ways in which events are caused, inanimate causation and intentional causation. Inanimate causation occurs when something has the power to act under certain circumstances, and intentional causation is motivated by beliefs and purposes which proves the reason for the event happening. Swinburne argues that this is vital to theistic thinking about the world in relation to humans because theists believe that one of the characteristics of God is that he is personal, and causation shows God's personal involvement which helps to allow humans to feel a sense of purpose in their lives.

Another important feature of the cosmological argument is the idea of the principle of sufficient reason. Leibniz argues that the universe is a specific, finite thing and so needs an explanation. In his book "Theodicy" he argues that "if you suppose the world eternal, you will suppose nothing but a succession of states and will not find in any of them a sufficient reason." This is important because it suggests that there is no evidence showing why the universe exists within the universe, and so the reason must lie outside of it. However none of the arguments have found an explanation as to why God created the world. Also, Leibniz's argument helps to strengthen the cosmological argument because it shows that we don't know why the world is created so there must be a superior being which created the world and has its own reasons for creation which only it knows.