



RS.TC2 The First Cause (Cosmological) Argument

AQA 8062 · Calculators not allowed · about 55 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

1 This question checks key vocabulary used in the First Cause argument.

(a) State what is meant by the cosmological argument. (1)

(b) State what is meant by causation, in the context of Aquinas's argument. (1)

(c) State what is meant by contingent. (1)

(d) State what is meant by a necessary being. (1)

(e) State what is meant by infinite regress. (1)

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

2 Give three of Aquinas's 'Five Ways' of arguing for God's existence.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

- 3** Explain two of Aquinas's arguments used in the First Cause argument. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4** Explain two contrasting views about whether the universe needs a first cause. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer.

(Total for Question 4 is 5 marks)

5 This question is about the First Cause argument for the existence of God. It is the AQA-style 24-mark, five-part question.

- (a)** State what is meant by an 'uncaused cause'. (1)
- (b)** Give two of Aquinas's arguments that make up the First Cause argument, as set out in the Summa Theologica. (2)
- (c)** Explain two reasons why Aquinas rejected the idea of an infinite regress of causes. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer. (4)
- (d)** Explain two contrasting philosophical views about Hume's criticism of the cosmological argument. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer. (5)
- (e)** Evaluate this statement: 'The First Cause argument proves that God exists.' In your answer you should: refer to philosophical teaching, refer to different points of view, reach a justified conclusion. (12)

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(Total for Question 5 is 24 marks)

- 6** Explain two ways belief in God as the 'uncaused cause' might affect how a believer thinks about the world today.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

- 7** Give three objections that have been made to the First Cause argument.

(Total for Question 7 is 3 marks)

Mark scheme · RS.TC2 The First Cause (Cosmological) Argument

Question 1

- (a) **B1** an argument for God's existence based on the existence of the universe and the belief that it must have a cause, oe
- (a) **Answer: An argument for God's existence based on the belief that the universe must have a cause.**
- (b) **B1** the relationship between a cause and its effect, the idea that every effect results from a prior cause, oe
- (b) **Answer: The relationship between a cause and its effect; every effect results from a prior cause.**
- (c) **B1** dependent on something else for its existence; something that could have not existed, oe
- (c) **Answer: Dependent on something else for its existence; something that could have not existed.**
- (d) **B1** a being whose existence does not depend on anything else and cannot fail to exist, oe
- (d) **Answer: A being whose existence does not depend on anything else and cannot fail to exist.**
- (e) **B1** an endless series of causes or events with no first member, oe
- (e) **Answer: An endless series of causes or events with no first member.**

Question 2

- **B1** the argument from motion (unmoved mover), oe
- **B1** the argument from causation (uncaused cause), oe
- **B1** the argument from contingency (necessary being); accept also the argument from degree or the argument from design, oe
- **Answer: Any three: motion (unmoved mover); causation (uncaused cause); contingency (necessary being); accept also degree or design.**

Question 3

- **B1** point 1: the argument from motion (First Way) - everything in the universe is in motion or change, and whatever moves is moved by something else, oe
- **B1** development: Aquinas argued this chain of movers cannot regress infinitely, so there must be a first, unmoved mover, not moved by anything prior, which he identified as God, oe
- **B1** point 2: the argument from causation (Second Way) - nothing can be the cause of itself, since that would mean it existed before itself, oe
- **B1** development: Aquinas argued there must be a first, uncaused cause, since an infinite regress of causes is impossible, and this first cause he identified with God, oe
- **Answer: E.g. the argument from motion (First Way); the argument from causation (Second Way).**

Question 4

- **B1** view 1: Aquinas and other supporters argue that everything that exists is caused by something else, so the universe itself, as a whole, must have a cause outside itself, which is God, oe
- **B1** development: without a first cause, there would be an infinite regress, which Aquinas believed was impossible, oe
- **B1** view 2: Hume argued that although objects within the universe need causes, this does not mean the universe as a whole needs a cause, oe
- **B1** development: treating the whole collection of caused things as if it were itself a further single thing requiring a cause is a mistake, since what is true of the parts is not necessarily true of the whole (the fallacy of composition), oe
- **B1** reference to a philosopher of religion made accurately, oe
- **Answer: Contrast: the universe needs a first cause (Aquinas) vs the fallacy of composition objection (Hume).**

Question 5

- (a) **B1** a first cause that is not itself caused by anything else, traditionally identified with God, oe
- **(a) Answer: A first cause not itself caused by anything else, traditionally identified with God.**
- (b) **B1** the argument from motion (First Way), oe
- (b) **B1** the argument from causation (Second Way); accept also the argument from contingency (Third Way), oe
- **(b) Answer: Any two: motion (First Way); causation (Second Way); contingency (Third Way).**
- (c) **B1** point 1: Aquinas argued that everything that exists has been caused by something else, and this chain of causes cannot go back forever, oe
- (c) **B1** development: he reasoned that if there was no first cause, there would be no earlier causes to produce the effects we see today, and so nothing would exist now, which is false, since things clearly do exist, oe
- (c) **B1** point 2: Aquinas argued that if the chain of causes had no beginning, there would be no explanation for why the universe exists at all, rather than nothing, oe
- (c) **B1** development: positing an uncaused first cause avoids this problem, since a cause that is itself uncaused would not require a further explanation, and Aquinas identified this first cause with God, oe
- **(c) Answer: E.g. an infinite regress would leave nothing to explain why things exist now; an uncaused first cause avoids needing a further explanation.**
- (d) **B1** view 1: Hume argued we only have grounds to say individual things within the universe need causes, because we have repeated experience of similar things being caused; we have no such experience of universes, so cannot assume the universe as a whole needs one (the fallacy of composition), oe
- (d) **B1** development: Bertrand Russell, in his 1948 BBC radio debate with Frederick Copleston, developed a similar point, arguing the universe could simply be a fact that exists without further explanation, and that it is a mistake to assume everything, including the universe as a totality, must have a cause, oe
- (d) **B1** view 2: other philosophers argue Hume's objection does not remove the force of the question of why anything exists at all rather than nothing, and that a first cause remains the most reasonable explanation for a contingent, causally-ordered universe, oe
- (d) **B1** development: some point out that modern cosmology, which holds the universe had a beginning (e.g. the Big Bang), fits comfortably with the idea that the universe itself began to exist and so needed a cause, which they argue supports rather than undermines Aquinas's reasoning, oe
- (d) **B1** reference to a philosopher of religion made accurately, oe
- **(d) Answer: Contrast: Hume/Russell's 'brute fact' objection vs the view that a first cause remains the best explanation, supported by Big Bang cosmology.**
- (e) **L4** (10-12): A well-argued, balanced answer that considers more than one point of view in a developed way, using accurate and detailed references to philosophical teaching to support each point, and reaches a clear, justified conclusion.
- (e) **L3** (7-9): A clear and reasoned answer that considers more than one point of view, supported by relevant references to philosophical teaching, though the justification of the conclusion may be less developed.
- (e) **L2** (4-6): A reasoned answer that considers at least one point of view, with some relevant supporting evidence, but with limited or no consideration of an alternative view.
- (e) **L1** (1-3): One or more relevant points are made, but with little or no supporting evidence and no reasoned conclusion.
- (e) **L0** (0): No relevant content.

- **(e) Indicative content:**

- Agree: Aquinas's argument from motion holds that everything in motion is moved by something else, and this chain cannot regress infinitely, so there must be a first, unmoved mover, identified with God.
- Agree: Aquinas's argument from causation holds that nothing can cause itself, so the chain of causes must have a first, uncaused cause, which Aquinas identified with God.
- Agree: the argument answers the deep question of why there is something rather than nothing, since God as a necessary, self-existent being provides a stopping point that avoids infinite regress.
- Agree: modern Big Bang cosmology, which suggests the universe had a beginning, is consistent with, though it does not prove, the idea that the universe needed a cause outside itself.
- Disagree: Hume argued we only know from experience that things within the universe need causes; this does not licence the further claim that the universe as a whole needs a cause (the fallacy of composition).
- Disagree: Russell argued in the 1948 Russell-Copleston debate that the universe could be regarded as simply existing, without requiring any further external cause or explanation.
- Disagree: even if the argument succeeds in showing there is a first cause, this does not by itself prove that cause has the further properties (personal, all-loving, all-knowing) believers attribute to God; it might just be an impersonal force.
- Disagree: some point to features of quantum physics, where certain events appear to occur without an identifiable prior cause in the classical sense, as challenging the premise that everything needs a cause.
- A balanced answer might conclude that whether the argument proves God's existence, or only makes belief in a first cause reasonable, depends on whether one accepts that the universe as a whole requires the same kind of causal explanation as things within it.

Question 6

- **B1** point 1: a believer might feel a sense of dependence and gratitude towards God, seeing their own existence, and that of the whole universe, as reliant on God for its being, oe
- **B1** development: e.g. this might be expressed through prayers of thanksgiving or worship that acknowledge God as creator and sustainer of all things, oe
- **B1** point 2: a believer might find in this argument a rational basis for religious commitment, seeing philosophy and reason as supporting, rather than conflicting with, their faith, oe
- **B1** development: e.g. some believers use natural theology arguments like this one when discussing faith with sceptics, as evidence that belief in God need not rest on faith alone, oe
- **Answer: E.g. a sense of dependence/gratitude expressed in worship; a rational basis for faith used in discussion with sceptics.**

Question 7

- **B1** Hume's argument that we cannot assume the universe as a whole needs a cause just because things within it do (the fallacy of composition), oe
- **B1** Russell's view that the universe might simply exist as a fact needing no further explanation, oe
- **B1** the argument, even if successful, does not prove the first cause has the qualities (e.g. personal, loving) that believers attribute to God, oe
- **Answer: Any three: the fallacy of composition (Hume); the 'brute fact' response (Russell); the argument does not establish a personal, loving God even if a first cause is granted.**