**‘Bridging the Gap’ Tasks – Religious Studies (Unit 2 – Philosophy of Religion)**

Log onto <https://massolit.io/>

Email/username - [UN-massolit@cayprep.edu.ky](mailto:UN-massolit@cayprep.edu.ky)

Password - may23freetrial

We will begin Year 12 by looking at the cosmological arguments. I would like you listen to a series of lectures about these arguments and complete the activities below. This is the direct link to the correct lecture series: <https://massolit.io/courses/the-cosmological-argument>

**Video 1 – the Cosmological Argument**

Watch the video and read the lecture summary:

* Cosmological arguments trace their origins to ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, with significant contributions from figures such as Saint Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century and later philosophers like Leibniz.
* These arguments begin with observable features of the universe, such as motion and causation, and infer the existence of an ultimate first principle, or God, which transcends direct observation.
* The process of reasoning in cosmological arguments, although moving from the seen to the unseen, is likened to scientific inference where unseen forces explain observable phenomena.
* Aquinas's approach is minimalist, suggesting that while humans cannot fully comprehend God's nature, the observable world allows us to infer the existence of an ultimate being, referred to as God.
* Aquinas presents five proofs for God's existence, with the first three categorized as cosmological arguments, focusing on movement, causation, and contingency as pathways to infer God's existence

**Vocabulary List**

Familiarize yourself with the key vocabulary from this lecture.

|  |  |  |
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| Vocabulary Term | Definition | Example Sentence |
| **Emeritus** | A retired college professor or minister who retains an honorary title. | The university honored the retired professor with the title of **emeritus** for his years of service. |
| **Philosophy** | The study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline. | She decided to major in **philosophy** to explore questions about existence and ethics. |
| **Cosmological** | Relating to the origin and development of the universe. | The **cosmological** argument seeks to explain the existence of the universe through a first cause. |
| **Transcends** | To go beyond the limits of something. | Her talents **transcend** the ordinary, reaching extraordinary levels of creativity. |
| **Empirically** | Based on observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic. | The scientist collected data **empirically** to ensure the study's accuracy. |
| **Dubious** | Hesitating or doubting; not to be relied upon. | His explanation for the missing cookies seemed **dubious** to his mother. |
| **Contingency** | A future event or circumstance which is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty. | The company prepared for any **contingency** by creating a comprehensive emergency plan. |
| **Inference** | A conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning. | Based on the evidence, the detective made an **inference** about the suspect's whereabouts. |

**Multiple-Choice Questions**

Choose the correct answer to these questions based on the video you have just watched.

**What is the main focus of cosmological arguments according to the lecture transcript?**

A. The nature and attributes of God

B. The historical development of religious beliefs

C. General observed features of the cosmos

D. The morality of human actions

**According to the lecture, what is the initial step in cosmological arguments?**

A. Defining the essence of God

B. Observing the motion and causation in the universe

C. Identifying moral principles

D. Analyzing religious texts

**Who is recognized as a key figure in cosmological arguments as mentioned in the lecture?**

A. Saint Augustine

B. Immanuel Kant

C. Saint Thomas Aquinas

D. Friedrich Nietzsche

**What does the cosmological argument attempt to infer from the known universe?**

A. The moral values of society

B. The existence of an unseen first principle

C. The historical accuracy of religious texts

D. The nature of human consciousness

**How does the lecturer describe the approach to God in cosmological arguments?**

A. As a detailed explanation of God's nature

B. As a denial of God's existence

C. As a minimalist approach not attempting to unfold God's essence

D. As a mystical revelation

**Which philosopher's arguments are primarily discussed in this lecture regarding cosmological arguments?**

A. René Descartes

B. David Hume

C. Saint Thomas Aquinas

D. Baruch Spinoza

**What does the term 'contingency' refer to in the context of cosmological arguments?**

A. The inevitability of cosmic events

B. The existence of multiple universes

C. The fact that there happens to be a world at all

D. The randomness of natural phenomena

**What is the basis for cosmological arguments as stated in the lecture?**

A. Speculation about the supernatural

B. Empirical observation and experience

C. Logical paradoxes

D. Theology and religious doctrine

**Which of the following is NOT one of the three aspects that Aquinas's cosmological arguments focus on?**

A. Movement

B. Causation

C. Contingency

D. Morality

**What does the lecturer suggest is a common feature between scientific methods and cosmological arguments?**

A. Both rely on direct observation of supernatural events

B. Both involve moving from observed phenomena to unseen explanations

C. Both reject the existence of any unseen forces

D. Both require religious belief for validation

**Reflection Questions**

What are your thoughts on what you have just learnt? Record your responses to the questions below:

1. **How does the cosmological argument relate to scientific methods of inference from observed phenomena to unobservable entities?**
2. **What are the implications of Aquinas' view that humans cannot comprehend the full nature of God?**
3. **In what ways do the first three of Aquinas' Five Ways constitute cosmological arguments, and how do they differ from one another?**
4. **How does the concept of contingency in Aquinas' third way contribute to the cosmological argument?**
5. **What are the potential strengths and weaknesses of the cosmological argument as a proof for the existence of God?**

**Video 2 – Motion and Causation**

Watch the video and read through the lecture notes.

* The argument from motion posits that everything in motion is moved by something else, leading to the conclusion of a primal unmoved mover, which is identified as God, though modern science challenges this by rejecting the idea that rest is the default state.
* Modern physics, including Newton's principle of inertia and Einstein's theories, suggest that motion and energy do not necessarily require an external mover, with some cosmologists proposing that quantum fluctuations can create movement from seemingly nothing.
* The argument from causation asserts that every event is caused by a prior event, leading to the necessity of a first uncaused cause, identified as God, though this is challenged by the question of why God should be exempt from needing a cause.
* Critics like David Hume argue that causation is merely a habitual expectation rather than a necessary connection, suggesting that the belief in a chain of causes leading to a first cause may be unfounded.
* Despite Hume's skepticism, many intuitively believe in genuine causal relationships, implying that either the chain of causes is infinite or there must be an ultimate first cause.

**Vocabulary List**

Familiarize yourself with the key vocabulary from this lecture.

|  |  |  |
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| Vocabulary Item | Definition | Example Sentence |
| **Causation** | The act or process of causing something to happen or exist. | The **causation** of the fire was determined to be an electrical fault. |
| **Empiricist** | A person who supports the theory that all knowledge is based on experience derived from the senses. | As an **empiricist**, she insisted on seeing the evidence before drawing any conclusions. |
| **Entropy** | A measure of disorder or randomness, often related to the second law of thermodynamics, which states that systems tend to move toward a state of disorder. | Over time, the abandoned house fell into **entropy** with its structure deteriorating gradually. |
| **Fluctuations** | Variations or changes in level, strength, or value, often occurring randomly over time. | The stock market experiences daily **fluctuations** that can affect investors' decisions. |
| **Inertia** | The tendency of an object to resist a change in its state of motion or rest. | The car's **inertia** kept it moving forward even after the driver took his foot off the accelerator. |
| **Premise** | A previous statement or proposition from which another is inferred or follows as a conclusion. | The lawyer built his case on the **premise** that the defendant was nowhere near the scene of the crime. |
| **Quantum** | Related to the smallest possible discrete unit of any physical property, often discussed in the context of quantum physics. | Scientists are still exploring the mysterious behaviors of particles at the **quantum** level. |
| **Skeptical** | Doubting or questioning the validity or authenticity of something purporting to be factual. | She was **skeptical** of the claims made by the new diet pill advertised on television. |

**Multiple-Choice Questions**

Select the correct answer based on the lecture you listened to.

**What is the primary criticism of Aquinas' argument from motion as discussed in the lecture?**

A. It assumes that motion requires an external agent to initiate.

B. It relies on the principle of inertia.

C. It contradicts Einstein's theory of relativity.

D. It assumes energy and matter are interchangeable.

**According to the lecture, what does Newton's principle of inertia state about objects in motion or at rest?**

A. Objects require an external force to remain in motion.

B. Objects will remain in their current state unless acted upon by an external force.

C. Objects naturally come to a stop without external force.

D. Objects in motion move in circular paths without external force.

**What concept from modern science is mentioned as a challenge to Aquinas' argument from motion?**

A. Quantum entanglement

B. Theory of relativity

C. Principle of inertia

D. Uncertainty principle

**What does the second law of thermodynamics, as mentioned in the lecture, imply about the universe?**

A. The universe is moving towards a more energetic state.

B. Energy in the universe is constantly created and destroyed.

C. The universe is running down from a more energetic to a less energetic state.

D. Motion in the universe can occur without any external forces.

**What is one of the main objections to Aquinas' argument from causation?**

A. It suggests that God is not the first cause.

B. It fails to account for quantum fluctuations.

C. It makes an exception for God as an uncaused cause.

D. It assumes that all causes are observable.

**In the lecture, how does Hume critique the notion of necessary causal connections?**

A. He argues that causation is a result of divine intervention.

B. He claims that causal connections are only illusions created by the mind.

C. He believes that causation is a result of quantum fluctuations.

D. He states that causation is clearly observable in all events.

**According to Hume, what do we actually observe in the world instead of causal connections?**

A. Continuous creation of energy

B. Constant conjunctions of events

C. Universal harmony of motion

D. Interchangeable states of matter and energy

**What does Hume mean by 'constant conjunctions' in his critique of causation?**

A. Events are tied together by divine will.

B. Events follow one another in a predictable pattern without observable ties.

C. Events are inherently connected through energy.

D. Events are bound by natural laws of physics.

**According to the lecture, what is a potential flaw in the argument that every event must have a prior cause?**

A. It ignores the role of quantum physics.

B. It fails to explain the nature of dark matter.

C. It cannot be supported if Hume's view of causation is correct.

D. It assumes the existence of parallel universes.

**What does the lecture suggest about modern cosmologists' views on the origin of motion and energy?**

A. They believe motion and energy can only come from divine intervention.

B. They argue that quantum fluctuations can create motion and energy from nothing.

C. They state that motion and energy are fixed and unchanging.

D. They propose that energy is always conserved in closed systems.

**Reflection Questions**

What are your thoughts on what you have just learnt? Record your responses to the questions below.

1. **Is Aquinas' Argument from Motion still relevant in light of modern scientific understandings?**
2. **How does the Argument from Causation confront the issue of God as an uncaused cause?**
3. **What are the implications of David Hume's skepticism about causation for Aquinas' arguments?**
4. **Can the concept of entropy and the second law of thermodynamics support Aquinas' search for a primal source of motion?**
5. **How do modern cosmological theories, such as quantum fluctuations, challenge or support the idea of a first cause?**

**Video Three: The Kalam Argument and Infinite Causation**

**Watch the video and read the lecture summary.**

* The lecture questions the assumption that the universe must have a finite beginning, suggesting it's logically possible for an infinite chain of causes to exist before the Big Bang.
* The Kalam cosmological argument, originating from Islamic philosophers, asserts that the universe must have had a beginning in time to avoid the impossibility of an actual infinite series of past events.
* While future events can potentially be infinite, an infinite series of past events implies a completed infinity, which is philosophically problematic and leads to paradoxes.
* Scientific perspectives on the universe's origin vary, with some cosmologists considering an oscillating universe model, where the Big Bang results from prior phases of contraction and expansion.
* The Kalam argument, even if accepted, does not inherently prove a divine first cause, as additional theological considerations are needed to align it with traditional religious beliefs.
* The cosmological arguments discussed do not directly lead to the concept of a divine being as described in religious texts, and thus may require supplementary evidence or revelation to support religious interpretations.

**Vocabulary List**

Familiarize yourself with the key vocabulary from this lecture.

|  |  |  |
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| Vocabulary Item | Definition | Example Sentence |
| **Ad infinitum** | A Latin phrase meaning "to infinity" or "forevermore," often used to describe a process that goes on endlessly. | The debate over the best pizza topping could go on **ad infinitum**. |
| **Cosmological** | Relating to the origin and development of the universe. | The **cosmological** theories about the universe fascinate many. |
| **Premise** | A previous statement or proposition from which another is inferred or follows as a conclusion. | The **premise** of the story was intriguing and kept readers hooked. |
| **Paradoxes** | Situations, statements, or concepts that are seemingly contradictory or logically unacceptable, yet might be true. | The **paradoxes** of time travel are difficult to comprehend. |
| **Oscillating** | Moving or swinging back and forth in a regular rhythm. | The **oscillating** fan kept the room cool during the summer. |
| **Theistic** | Relating to or characterized by belief in the existence of a god or gods, especially belief in a personal God as a creator. | His views leaned towards a **theistic** interpretation of the universe. |
| **Revelation** | The act of revealing or disclosing something previously unknown or hidden, especially in a religious context as a divine truth. | The prophet claimed to have received a **revelation** from the divine. |
| **Benevolent** | Well-meaning and kindly; often used to describe someone who wishes to do good and help others. | The **benevolent** leader donated much of his wealth to charity. |

**Multiple-Choice Questions**

Select the correct answer based on the lecture you listened to.

**Why does the Kalam cosmological argument assert that the universe must have had a beginning in time?**

A. Because an infinite series of past events is considered impossible

B. Because the universe is constantly expanding

C. Because time is a finite construct

D. Because energy cannot be created or destroyed

**Which philosophers were instrumental in developing the Kalam cosmological argument?**

A. Al Farabee and Al Ghazali

B. Plato and Aristotle

C. Descartes and Kant

D. Hume and Locke

**What is the primary focus of the Kalam cosmological argument compared to other cosmological arguments?**

A. The notions of time and infinity

B. The role of divine intervention

C. The existence of parallel universes

D. The concept of space and matter

**What is one of the philosophical paradoxes mentioned in relation to infinity?**

A. The set of even numbers is smaller than the set of odd numbers

B. One infinite set can be larger than another

C. Infinity can be easily visualized

D. Infinity is a concept unique to mathematics

**What is a key difference between past and future infinity according to the lecture?**

A. Future infinity is potential, while past infinity would be actualized

B. Past infinity is easier to comprehend than future infinity

C. Both past and future infinity are impossible

D. Future infinity is finite, while past infinity is limitless

**What scientific theory is mentioned as a potential alternative to a primal beginning of the universe?**

A. The steady-state theory

B. The oscillating universe theory

C. The theory of relativity

D. The multiverse theory

**How do some defenders of the Kalam argument describe the first cause?**

A. As a non-physical personal agent

B. As an inevitable result of cosmic forces

C. As a consequence of natural selection

D. As a spontaneous occurrence

**What does the lecture suggest is necessary to connect the Kalam argument to the God of traditional religious belief?**

A. Supplemental considerations from Scripture or divine revelation

B. Scientific evidence of divine intervention

C. A universally accepted definition of divinity

D. Historical accounts of religious experiences

**According to the lecture, why might the Kalam argument not directly lead to the God of traditional theistic religions?**

A. Because it doesn't specify the nature of the first cause

B. Because it lacks historical evidence

C. Because it contradicts scientific theories

D. Because it doesn't account for moral principles

**What does the lecture mention as a common assertion of traditional theistic religions regarding the creation of the universe?**

A. The universe was created by divine command from nothing

B. The universe always existed in some form

C. The universe emerged from a scientific anomaly

D. The universe was formed through natural processes

**Reflection Questions**

What are your thoughts on what you have just learnt? Record your responses to the questions below.

1. **What are the implications of the Kalam cosmological argument on our understanding of the universe's origins?**
2. **How does the concept of infinity complicate our understanding of the universe's timeline?**
3. **What are the philosophical and scientific arguments against an infinitely old universe?**
4. **In what ways do cosmological arguments like the Kalam argument intersect with religious beliefs?**
5. **How do modern interpretations of the Big Bang theory relate to the concept of a first cause?**

**Video Four: Contingency**

Watch the video and make your own notes.

**Video Five: Evaluating Cosmological Arguments**

Watch the video and read the lecture notes.

* The cosmological argument leads to an abstract conception of God that differs from the personal God worshipped in major theistic religions, raising questions about its relevance to religion.
* While cosmological reasonings may not offer watertight deductive proofs, they resonate with human needs for understanding existence, suggesting a persuasive rather than coercive rationale for God's existence.
* The principle of sufficient reason posits that there must be an explanation for everything, yet this cannot be proved, as it's possible the universe consists of inexplicable brute facts.
* Despite the pursuit of a grand unified theory in science, questions about why the universe exists at all remain unsolved, highlighting the limitations of scientific explanations.
* The cosmological argument suggests an ultimate reason for existence might be a necessary being, but this does not solve the mystery of creation, reflecting a hope in the rationality of the universe.

**Vocabulary List**

Familiarize yourself with the key vocabulary from this lecture.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Vocabulary Item | Definition | Example Sentence |
| **Validity** | The quality of being logically or factually sound; the state of being valid. | The **validity** of the experiment was questioned due to the lack of control variables. |
| **Conception** | The way in which something is perceived or regarded; an idea or concept. | His **conception** of justice was influenced by ancient philosophers. |
| **Contingency** | A future event or circumstance that is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty; the condition of being dependent on chance or uncertain conditions. | The plan was designed to accommodate any **contingency** that might arise during the project. |
| **Inference** | A conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning. | From the clues provided, she made an **inference** about the identity of the thief. |
| **Explanatory** | Intended to explain or make clear. | The **explanatory** notes helped the students understand the complex text. |
| **Anomaly** | Something that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected. | The scientist discovered an **anomaly** in the data that could not be easily explained. |
| **Reconciling** | The process of making two things compatible or consistent with each other. | **Reconciling** different theories in physics remains a significant challenge for scientists. |
| **Enigma** | A person or thing that is mysterious, puzzling, or difficult to understand. | The disappearance of the artifact remains an **enigma** to historians. |

**Multiple-Choice Questions**

Select the correct answer based on the lecture you listened to.

**What is the main idea behind the cosmological argument from contingency discussed in the lecture?**

A. It claims that the universe is self-sustaining and needs no explanation.

B. It argues that every fact and proposition requires a sufficient reason.

C. It suggests that the universe is a necessary being in itself.

D. It proposes that the universe is a product of random chance.

**According to the lecture, which philosopher is associated with the term "ontological rootedness"?**

A. Blaise Pascal

B. Martin Heidegger

C. Simon May

D. Bertrand Russell

**What does the lecture suggest about the relationship between the cosmological argument and personal religious experience?**

A. The cosmological argument fully explains personal religious experiences.

B. Personal religious experience is unrelated to the cosmological argument.

C. Personal religious experience is often more compelling than logical arguments.

D. The cosmological argument invalidates personal religious experiences.

**Which philosopher is mentioned as having a conversion experience called the "night of fire"?**

A. Martin Heidegger

B. Herbert McCabe

C. Blaise Pascal

D. Stephen Hawking

**What does the lecture suggest about the status of the cosmological argument as a deductive proof?**

A. It is widely accepted as a watertight deductive proof.

B. It is considered an outdated and irrelevant argument.

C. It is seen as persuasive but not deductively valid.

D. It is primarily a scientific argument.

**How does the lecture describe the God conceived in the cosmological argument?**

A. As a personal and intimate being

B. As an abstract and impersonal force

C. As identical to the God of the Abrahamic religions

D. As a deity focused on human affairs

**Which philosopher's phrase is used to describe the universe as a possible brute fact without explanation?**

A. Simon May

B. Bertrand Russell

C. Blaise Pascal

D. Herbert McCabe

**What does the lecture imply about the search for a "grand theory of everything" in science?**

A. It has already been achieved and explains all phenomena.

B. It is unnecessary due to current scientific understanding.

C. It continues to seek a coherent explanatory structure.

D. It will never be realized due to scientific limitations.

**According to the lecture, what does Stephen Hawking question in his book "A Brief History of Time"?**

A. The validity of cosmological arguments

B. The existence of God

C. What makes the universe come into existence

D. The accuracy of quantum theory

**What caution does the lecture offer about explaining the universe's existence by invoking God?**

A. It completely resolves the puzzle of existence.

B. It provides a definitive scientific explanation.

C. It highlights the mystery rather than solving it.

D. It is incompatible with rational thought.

**Reflection Questions**

What are your thoughts on what you have just learnt? Record your responses to the questions below.

1. **How does the conception of God in cosmological arguments differ from the God of theistic religions, and what implications does this have for religious belief?**
2. **What role does the principle of sufficient reason play in the cosmological argument, and can it be justified?**
3. **Can the cosmological argument provide a persuasive case for the existence of God despite not being a deductively valid proof?**
4. **In what ways do human experiences of dependency and vulnerability relate to the cosmological argument, and how might they influence belief in God?**
5. **What are the limitations of using the cosmological argument to address the question of why there is something rather than nothing?**