OCR H573 | INDEPENDENT REVISION

A* Model Essay

Observation Arguments

Philosophy of Religion

To what extent can cosmological reasoning establish the God of classical theism?

1,621 response words | Complete annotated PDF | Individual topic edition

What is included

A complete original response, an argument plan, paragraph-level AO1/AO2 annotations and source works for further reading.

A* describes the intended style of this teaching model. This is independently written, not an OCR-marked script or a guaranteed grade.

Use this model to study argument and evaluation, then write your own answer. Do not submit it as your own assessed work.

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Argument plan

To what extent can cosmological reasoning establish the God of classical theism?

Thesis: The cosmological argument offers a serious explanation of why contingent and derivative reality depends on a non-contingent ground, especially when framed through Aquinas's essentially ordered causes and Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason. However, its conclusion remains conditional on controversial explanatory principles and does not by itself establish the knowledge, goodness or personal agency of the God worshipped by classical theists. It is therefore sufficient as a limited metaphysical explanation, not as a complete explanation of the existence of God.

1. Aquinas's First and Second Ways explain presently derivative actuality rather than merely proposing an earliest event.

Counter-argument: A critic may accept a fundamental physical reality without identifying it as a personal divine cause.

Interim judgement: The Ways expose the incompleteness of an entirely derivative order, but further reasoning is needed to identify its ground as God.

2. The contingency argument asks why the whole contingent order exists, even if that order has no beginning.

Counter-argument: Aquinas's temporal move is vulnerable to Mackie's scope objection, and Russell can reject the demand for a total explanation.

Interim judgement: A Leibnizian reformulation is stronger than the original temporal inference, provided the Principle of Sufficient Reason is defended.

3. A necessary being terminates explanation without the arbitrariness of a brute contingent universe.

Counter-argument: Calling God necessary may be a privileged stopping point, and Hume and Kant question whether existence can be necessary in the required sense.

Interim judgement: Necessary existence is explanatory only if it belongs intelligibly to the ground's nature rather than being attached to it by definition.

4. Cosmological reasoning is compatible with scientific accounts because it addresses ontological dependence rather than a gap in cosmology.

Counter-argument: That compatibility does not show that the metaphysical argument is true or that its terminus has the attributes of theism.

Interim judgement: The argument's reach is real but limited: it can motivate an ultimate ground more successfully than it can establish the God of religion.