**Theme C: The existence of God and revelation.**

**Philosophical arguments for the existence of God**

**The Cosmological Argument:**

1. Everything was caused to exist
2. The universe exists
3. Must be something without a cause itself to have caused everything else
4. The ‘First Cause’ explains why the universe has a cause
5. The first cause is God.

**Peter Vardy’s further explanation of the theory:**

The success of the argument lies on the question to why there is a universe. The cosmological argument fails if you can accept the universe is just there or that it can be explained by infinite regress. Additionally, a God that must have an uncaused cause which transcends the distinction between something and nothing must be shown to be creditable.

**Support of the argument:**

Links to the Kalam cosmological argument from Islamic Philosophers. Must reject certain assumptions to accept this:

* Every event has a cause
* The universe requires an explanation outside the universe
* The question to what caused God is illegitimate

The dominos analogy

* For dominos to fall, someone must push the first to allow the rest to.
* Could suggest God is that person who began the infinite causes that progressed in the universe.

**Against the argument:**

We only believe the universe has a beginning because we struggle to comprehend eternity and therefore an infinite amount of causes.

The Big Bang theory proves the universe does not need a first cause and instead began because of the random collision of sub-atomic particles. This is what modern scientists believe, based upon evidence. General revelation in the form of holy books can be unreliable because of the lack of technology and evidence to bring to the present day. Additionally, many myths at the time may weaken the amount of truth in the books.

David Hume: no necessary link between cause and supposed effect, could occur simultaneously.

Particle physics suggests some particles can go in and out of existence without a cause HOWEVER we may discover in the future that they do.

**The Teleological Argument:**

This is based on the general patterns and order throughout the universe. When one realises that there is an order, they realise that the universe must have a purpose and thus was created by something. The only being we know of who could create a universe, because of their omnipotence, is God.

**Support of the argument:**

William Paley: theory of the watchmaker

* If you came across a pocket watch you would presume its intricate design would make you think it was made by a watchmaker
* Intricate design of the universe therefore must have been designed by something
* This is God

F.R. Tennent: ‘Goldilocks Principle’

Proper name for his theory is the Anthropic Principle. It is based upon the idea that everything is just right for human development in the universe e.g. the climate perfectly suits us. He thus argues that only an intelligent designer could have created a universe so suited to human development, so God must exist as He is the only being cable of doing so.

**Against the argument:**

Richard Dawkins: the blind watchmaker

If there is a God, he must be blind as there is too much suffering that occurs in the world. Therefore, they are not intelligent if they cannot spare people from diseases or allow natural disasters – the universe is too disordered.

Links to the problem of evil and suffering which can disprove God’s exitance by looking at the destruction that occurs in the world and questioning whether God can be omnibenevolent as a result.

Charles Darwin: theory of evolution

Species gradually evolved over time and continue to through natural selection and speciation due to isolation. Directly criticises Newtons claim that due to thumbs being so detailed, it proves a god must have designed them. This suggests that we have thumbs due to the benefits of the mutation rather than because we humans were always designed to have them. Charles Darwin himself was a Christian yet this suggests he did not believe the teleological argument is the best way to prove God’s exitance.

**Miracles:**

**Types of miracles**

Natural: an event caused by God which appears to break the laws of nature

Intervention: coincidental series of event which could be considered the action of God

**Peter Vardy’s four possible definitions of miracles**

* A transgression of the laws of nature brought about by God
* An event which is in accordance with the laws of nature but which the believer sees as being due to the action of God
* An inexplicable event which within the form of life of the believing community is seen as a miracle
* A change for the better than can occur within the character of a human for the better

**Support of the occurrence of miracles:**

Miracles in the Bible

* Jesus turning water into wine (natural miracle).
* Jesus brining Lazarus back from the dead (natural miracle). Suggests God is working through Jesus (god on earth) to show his omnipotence by allowing him person to survive and also suggests he is omnibenevolent and works personally with people on earth to save and protect them. Therefore, this is a sign of his work and exitance.
* John 20:30-31 – miracles are “signs” of God’s exitance. This passage can translate as making people “continue” to believe in God as the signs strengthen their trust in his exitance and faith in sparing him. Could also translate as making people “come” to believe in God and enlighten them through miracles that he does exist.

Natural miracles an occur within due to a change in character.

**Arguments against the occurrence of miracles:**

Strauss: Biblical scholar

Miracles may have been influenced by myths which distort the truth in the Gospels about Jesus’ life. Therefore, we should see miracles as myths and search for spiritual meaning within them rather than viewing them as historical events.

Is God really omnibenevolent if he gives one person a miracle and not another? The inconsistent triad (Epicurus) suggests he cannot if he does this as he favours some people over others. Also, we can question why he does not break the laws of nature to help some people and not others. Are we then all not equal? Who is superior? Why does he not help in horrific situations such as the holocaust?

**The problem of evil and suffering:**

**Types of suffering**

Natural suffering: caused by a natural event e.g. an earthquake

Man-made suffering: caused by people e.g. murder

This generally challenges the question to if God can be all his qualities including omnibenevolent if he allows suffering in the world even when he is omnipotent.

**Arguments against the problem which prove God still is omnibenevolent:**

Islam:

Shaytan, who is believed to be the source of all evil in the world, tempted Adam and Hawa. Muslims believe God created the world perfectly, and when you are born you have a clean slate. However, you must submit to the will of God and avoid temptation from Shaytan. He gives Muslims free will but knows their choices, therefore he does not intervene to stop them from sub coming to evil as he does not control them and life is a ‘test’ for all humans.

Christianity:

Evil only came into the world due to original sin due to the events in the fall. Therefore, humans cannot be blamed for their action as Adam and Eve are the ones responsible. When people rebel against God, evil results. Jesus is a Christian’s salvation from sins.

**Supporting arguments to the problem which disprove God is omnibenevolent:**

The inconsistent triad – Epicurus

Evil

Omnipotent

Omnibenevolent

Orlando Shooting

By a Muslim attacker. Why would they believe that Shaytan tempted him and God not have done something to prevent it? Surely if he is all powerful he can break the laws of free will Shaytan has to prevent it. Civilians cannot have deserved it.

**Arguments from science against God:**

W K Clifford: It is wrong always, everywhere to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.

Religion cannot necessarily provide evidence and modern science can neither prove or disprove the exitance of God. Best theories have some form of evidence – evolution and the big bang theory.

**The nature of the divine and revelation:**

**Revelation:**

Special revelation: direct revelation through miracles, dreams, prophesies or experience

General revelation: indirect revelation through scripture, nature or conscience

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|  | Proves the exitance of God | Disproves the exitance of God |
| Special Revelation | Prophecy – In the Old Testament Isaiah predicts Jesus’ births 8000 years previous. This does occur (according to the Bible) proving that Jesus is who he said and has a valid message – gives proof through revelation.Dreams/Visions – Christians believe God provides knowledge through them that gives special revelation. E.g. Joseph sees Angel Gabriel in a dream to confirm Jesus is the son of God and that she has not been unfaithful. | Prophecies are only important if they come true. This one may have come true but many prophecies in the Old Testament did not. May be based upon myths or the thought ‘truth’ could be based on mythology.Everyone has dreams, not everyone believes these are revelations. Mainly religious believers think their dreams have a meaning. Just because a dream cannot be explained does not mean it is a message from God.  |
| General Revelation | “The skies proclaim the work of his hands” – Psalm 19:1. Suggests that religious and non-religious people can experience revelation through nature. This links to the design argument and possibly implies God is immanent in the world. Also explores his omnipotence and can strengthen a believer’s trust that God has designed the universe for a purpose.God is thought to be revealed in holy books. In Islam, the books are thought to be the direct word of God revealed to Muhammad by Jibril. Religious believers hope to gain clearer understandings of God’s character and gain spiritual strength from his words. | Scientific understanding and the theory of evolution disproves the fact that the world has been designed by God entirely. Therefore, nature alone may not be powerful enough to convert or allow a non-religious person to experience revelation. It only strengthens a beliers trust. Holy books can be based on myths as they were written so long ago (Strauss). These can also be viewed from various different perspectives leading religious people to dispute on the nature of God and his aims for us. If religious believers are unsure, how can non- religious people convert through this type of revelation as a result of holy books? |

There are questions to which type of revelation is more important. It is down to the believer to interpret the situation and the amount the revelation strengthens the belief. A non-religious person cannot guess what a religious person should think and vice versa.

Special revelation suggests God is immanent and personal because He interferes with the universe He created in order to spread the truth.

General revelation suggest God is transcendent and impersonal because revelation occurs without his directed intervention. Also, if he is transcendent He is also omniscient because He has complete knowledge of what occurs.

**Enlightenment as a source of knowledge about the divine:**

Hinduism

Enlightenment can occur through study and meditation. Texts are written by these individuals called the ‘Smriti’.

Buddhism

Only believe in the divine rather than a personal God. Therefore, knowledge can provide enlightenment. This is their goal of life.