

# The Cosmological Argument

## The Kalam Version

### History

**Exam Specification:** 'The Kalam version with reference to ... Craig ...' (WJEC)

- The Kalam argument began in medieval times with Islamic Scholars, and this is where the title 'Kalam' comes from, meaning 'speech'.
- It was then overshadowed for many years by more popular forms of the cosmological argument (especially those established by Aquinas).
- Its resurgence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been at the hands of American Philosopher William Lane Craig.

### The modern formulation

- The modern formulation of the argument is a set of three statements - called a 'syllogism'. A syllogism has two 'premises', or truth claims - which, when tied together, form a conclusion.
- The basic form is as follows:
  1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause
  2. The Universe began to exist
  3. Therefore, the Universe has a cause

### Philosophical support for the premises

**Exam Specification:** 'Key features of the cosmological argument, e.g. ... causation ... infinite regress ...' (Edexcel)

- Philosophical support for causes of beginnings (Premise 1):
  - It is more plausible than it's denial (that things that begin to exist have no cause).
  - Therefore, the Burden of Proof is on those who wish to say that there is no cause.

**Exam Specification:** 'God as first cause - avoiding an infinite regress in the causal chain.' (AQA)

- Philosophical support derives from the impossibility of an 'actual infinite' (Premise 2):
  - A 'Potential infinite' is where we start counting, and could - potentially - continue forever. At any one stage, this set of numbers is finite, but it always has the 'potential' to go on for infinity.
  - An 'Actual infinite', however, is where we do not *start* counting, or *stop* counting. There is no beginning and no end. This set of numbers really is infinitely long.
  - Many argue that an 'Actual infinite' is not possible in the real world. Imagine that we have an actual infinite, and we divide it in half - then we would have two actual infinities. Is that possible?
  - So, if 'Actual infinities' are impossible, then the Universe cannot be actually infinitely old (that is, with *no* beginning). Therefore, although it may be potentially infinite it must have a beginning.

### Proof

**Exam Specification:** 'Top level answers may well have some discussion about the concept of "proof".' (AQA)

- The Kalam Cosmological argument is a 'deductive argument'.
- This means that if it is logically valid, and its premises are true, then the conclusion *must* (rather than just *may*) be true.
- If we replace the words with symbols, we can see this inevitability.
  1. 'All A's have a C'
  2. 'The U is an A'
  3. 'Therefore, the U has a C'

Note that if *all* A's have a C, and U is an A, then it *must* be the case that U has a C.

