**Example 1.(a) Explain Aquinas’ cosmological arguments for the existence of God. [20]**

The cosmological argument is an a posteriori argument. It attempts to prove the existence of God in a number of ways. St Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274CE) came up with five ways to prove God’s existence. The first three ways are known as the cosmological and are about motion, cause and necessity. The fourth way is the moral and the fifth is the teleological. The first way is about motion. He argues that God is the unmoved mover. It focusses on everything constantly moving from potentiality to actuality and God must have existed to provide the potentiality for the universe to come into actuality. God is the top being so he is not moved by anybody else. If we were to trace back everything that is moved then we would eventually be traced back to God and we wouldn’t have to trace back any further than that. The second way is about God as the uncaused causer. The first way was linked to changes in state, whereas the second way is about what causes things to exist. We cannot have an infinite regression as it is not a sufficient explanation. Therefore there must be a God who is uncaused, but is the causer of everything else. The third way that Aquinas developed was the argument that God is a necessary being. It would be a logical contradiction to argue that God does not exist as he has the property of necessity. That means he cannot not exist. All contingent things depend on God and everything in the universe is contingent. Therefore the universe requires an explanation outside of itself. That is God. Aquinas’ three ways to prove God’s existence show logically that God is the designer of the universe. There are other forms of the cosmological argument. For instance, Leibniz argued about sufficient reason, whereby if something is logical and provides a good enough explanation then it is probably correct. Therefore Aquinas’ arguments are probably true. However it does not bring much value to those seeking religious faith or to those seeking to verify their own faith.

**Example 1. (a) Explain Aquinas’ cosmological arguments for the existence of God. [20]**

Aquinas’ cosmological argument attempts to prove that God exists. These arguments are from the first three ways of Aquinas’ five ways. There are two types of proof. Mathematical proof can show something is 100% correct and empirical proof. This empirical proof only shows they have a high probability. In other words the cosmological argument at best can only show that there is a good chance that God exists but there is a chance that God doesn’t exist. Aquinas’ arguments are of the empirical kind. The first way is about motion. Aquinas understood motion to be about change of state and used the example of wood that has the potential to become hot. Thus the object (wood) can move from potentiality (to become hot) to actuality (actually being hot). For this to happen it needs being acted upon by something hot (e.g. fire). However, nothing can be both potential and actual at the same time. Something may have the potential but it needs being acted upon to bring that actuality about. But Aquinas argued that you can’t have infinite regression. Therefore there must be something that contains all actuality and so is unmoved or unchanged and starts the chain of changes. This he calls God. The second way is linked to causation. Things cannot bring themselves into existence, because they would already have to exist to be able to do that. Such an idea is therefore a contradiction. So something must already exist to cause other things to come into existence. Infinite regression is impossible. So there must be something that exists that is itself uncaused yet causes everything else. Again, Aquinas referred to this as God. The third way is about contingency. Contingent beings have the property that they depend upon something else for their existence. They need not be and at one time they did not exist. The universe consists of contingent beings and so there must have been a time when nothing existed. But the universe does exist. So there must be a non-contingent (necessary) being to bring about the beginning. This Aquinas called God. Aquinas did not think that God was the first in the series and hence had no part to play in the universe. Rather that God is both the first in the series and sustainer.

**Example 1. (b) 'Science, not God, tells us all we need to know about the beginning of the universe.' Evaluate this view with reference to cosmological arguments for the existence of God. [30]**

There are arguments both to support this view and also arguments against this view. There are very strong arguments in support of the claim. Aquinas’ cosmological argument is very unscientific and it is science that gives us facts and truth. We now know that the universe came about through the Big Bang and this can be demonstrated scientifically. The cosmological argument uses outdated understandings of the universe. For instance, the idea of cause and effect has radically changed from the time of Aquinas. Quantum physics shows that events can occur without a cause, thus demolishing the cosmological argument. God has always been used to explain things that we cannot explain. However, science has advanced so that now there is no need to propose the existence of a divine being since science provides explanations. The existence of a divine being is impossible to verify so it offers no explanations. However, theists argue that science cannot explain what happened before the Big bang, or indeed what caused the Big Bang. Science fails to explain why there is a universe at all. It can’t answer those types of questions. Science asks how questions not why questions. Personally I agree with the statement in the question. I think religion is all about faith and an attitude to life, whilst science is about real knowledge of the world. In terms of using reason and rationality, science is at war with religion. We don’t need religion to know about the beginnings of the universe. The world religions just give us myths not facts.

**Example 1. (b) 'Science, not God, tells us all we need to know about the beginning of the universe.' Evaluate this view with reference to cosmological arguments for the existence of God. [30]**

Although the view expressed appears to be a debate about the relative success of science and religion in terms of telling us about the beginning of the universe, in fact I think the real thrust of the view centres around the phrase “all we need to know”. If it is all about knowing the details and how exactly the universe came into being then it may well be that science gives us the best information. Science will appeal to the Big Bang and the empirical evidence. It will argue that the universe had an actual starting point. It appeals to rational knowledge acquired through the senses. 8 However, the cosmological argument argues the same though it goes one step further and argues that God is the cause of the Big Bang. The cosmological argument, like science appeals to empiricism and rational knowledge. The form of its argument is inductive and a posteriori – the same as science. More evidence of the process of reasoning it has an advantage over science since science seems unable at present to go back to the stage before the Big bang. So in that sense, it could be said that God tells us what we need to know – i.e. what the cause of the beginning of the universe is. However, if the cosmological argument is flawed as many argue, then it will tell us nothing about the beginnings of the universe. It rests on ideas such as cause and effect but quantum physics has rejected the traditional understanding of cause and effect. The extent to which this explains causes such as the beginnings of the universe is however contested. In summary, science has not disproved God and the cosmological has not disproved the scientific explanation. Nevertheless, it is God that offers an explanation as to why the universe began. Scientific laws and explanations are impersonal. They merely appeal to further scientific laws. Science is unable to explain why the laws are as they are. Swinburne argued that that requires a personal explanation - a divine being. If the universe came into being by an act of the will of a divine being then I would suggest we do need to know that. That is more important than knowing the order and combining of molecules and atoms. But it is not something that science can tell us. So I conclude, that if there is a God, then it is God and not science that will tell us all we need to know about the beginning of the universe.