

Philosophy & Ethics: Chapter 1.1: Exam question plan

'Aristotle's theory of the 4 causes explains nothing.' Discuss (30 marks)

"we do not have knowledge of a thing until we have grasped its why, that is to say, its cause."

FOR (explains nothing)	AGAINST (explains something)
Fallacy of composition – error of thinking that what is true of a part is true of the whole. Table has a purpose, humans may not have a purpose	Uses sylogism to come to conclusions
No proof that the universe has a purpose/ telos Bertrand Russel (British, a founder of analytic philosophy): things just simply exist, 'I should say that the universe is just there, and that's all' Brute fact Jean-Paul Satre (French, philosophy of existentialism): pointless to think that the universe has a purpose	Can be applied to many things, such as a necklace: material = silver or gold, formal = chain, clasp, pendant, efficient = jeweller, final = social status, gift, improves outfit, etc. By reason, Aristotle applied that to everything. Purpose/final cause is a desire for God – Prime Mover attracts everything to it.
Difficult to understand as his writings were actually lecture notes, not meant for publication	Main concepts would be correct in the notes
Material cause depends on empiricism /use of the senses. Senses are not reliable according to Plato – how do we know that chairs look the same to everyone? Descartes – 'I think, therefore I am'	Aristotle uses both empiricism (material, formal) and rationalism (efficient, final)
No proof that there is an efficient cause of the universe. Humanists/atheists reject a god. Big bang theory - Epicurean Thesis : everything is down to chance. Richard Dawkins – 'we are machines for propagating DNA'	Prime mover is efficient cause, Christianity believes in an efficient cause, creation out of nothing (ex nihilo) – John 1:3 'All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Some Christians say god created big bang – science and religion can co-exist
---	Thomas Aquinas adopted some ideas from him – Christian guy. The theory doesn't clash with Big Bang theory or the existence of a God
---	Aristotle says there can be several explanations for something (scientific or religious)
Emotions have no material or formal cause, and their efficient and final cause is not clear	---

'Aition' – cause