

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY



LAST TIME

- Moral Argument
- Objective Right and Wrong Prove God

NATURAL THEOLOGY

- The evidence of God through observable, natural processes and understanding.

ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

- Originated in 11th century by St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury
- Looking for a single argument to explain God and his attributes.

ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

- God as the greatest conceivable being.
- If you can conceive of anything greater, that would be the God.
- Essentially the existence of God follows from the very concept of God.

A FOOL SAYS THERE IS NO GOD

- “Once you understand the concept of God, you will see that God must exist and, therefore, anyone who asserts that God does not sit is uttering a logically incoherent statement.”

TERMINOLOGY

- *Ontos*- being.
- The argument attempts to deduce the being of God from the very concept of God.

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

- Possible words.
- Not talking about parallel universes.
- Abstract descriptions, maximal description, of the way reality might be.

EXAMPLES

- ‘The prime minister is a prime number.’
 - Not possibly true.
 - False in every possible world.
- “Hillary Clinton is president.”
 - Not true, but it is possibly true.

TRUTH OF GODS EXISTENCE

“To say that God exists in some possible world is simple to say that the proposition that God exists is true in one of these possible worlds. To say that God exists in a possible world is simple to say that that proposition is true in one of the descriptions of reality.”

MAXIMAL EXCELLENCE AND GREATNESS

- Alvin Plantinga's argument appeals to the idea of God being maximally great.
- A maximally excellent being would be omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good.
- Maximally great being will be maximally excellent in all possible worlds.
- The great conceivable being.

HARD TO UNDERSTAND?

- What could exist or what could be real?
 - I could be skinny = Me being skinny is possible.
 - I could have 3 brothers = me having 3 brother is possible.
 - What could you be? That is possible.

PLANTINGA'S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

- 1 It is possible that a maximally great being (God) exists.

CONT.

- 2 If it is possible that a maximally great being exists, then a maximally great being exists in some possible world. (Why? Because that is just what it means to be possible.)

CONT.

- 3 If a maximally great being exists in some possible world, then it exists in every possible world. (Why? Because that is the way maximal greatness is defined. Maximal greatness means you have maximal excellence in every possible world.)

CONT.

- 4 If a maximally great being exists in every possible world, then it exists in the actual world. (Why? Remember we said earlier that the actual world is one of the possible worlds, namely, it is the one possible world that is actual. So if he exists in every possible world, then he exists in the actual world.)

CONT.

- 5 If a maximally great being exists in the actual world, then a maximally great being exists.

CONT.

➤ 6 Therefore, a maximally great being exists.

EXPLANATION

- Steps 2-6 are actually very uncontroversial!
- They follow by definition.
- Premise #1 is what we focus on.

EPISTEMIC VS METAPHYSICAL

- Epistemic possibility means that “for all we know, something is possible.”
- Metaphysical means it cannot be false if it is true. Can something be that way or is it impossible?

IS A MAXIMALLY GREAT BEING...

- Metaphysically possible or just epistemologically possible?
- For the Ontological Argument to fail, the concept of God would have to be metaphysically impossible.

DEFENDING PREMISE #1

- Parodies do not work,
- You cannot have a necessarily existent lion, because a lion could not exist in say a universe that was simply a cosmological singularity of infinite density.

DEFENDING PREMISE #1

- Intuitively, the idea of a maximally great being seems to be a coherent concept that therefore such a being is possible.

DEFENDING PREMISE #1

- Using other arguments, we can safely defend premise #1.
- The Contingency Argument gives us a metaphysically necessary being who is the source of all reality outside himself.
- The Moral Argument gives us God as well.

DEFENDING PREMISE #1

➤ Conceptualist Argument

- 1. Abstract objects are either independently existing realities or else concepts in some person's mind.
- 2. Abstract objects are not independently existing realities.
- From which it follows,
- 3. If abstract objects are concepts in some person's mind, then an omniscient, metaphysically necessary being exists.
- 4. Therefore, an omniscient, metaphysically necessary being exists.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- “We should not think of the arguments for God’s existence as links in a single chain, where the chain is only as strong as the weakest link in the chain. Rather we ought to think of the arguments for the existence of God as being links in a coat of chain mail, where all of the links reinforce one another and the mail is not as weak as the weakest link. “

NEXT TIME

➤ Read:

➤ Excursus- Natural Theology- Properly Basic Belief in
God pp. 187-221

QUESTIONS?