

GOD: Cosmological Argument

Lecture 3

Phil 1000, Fall 2008
Prof. Bryan Benham

Outline

- Review
 - Argument vs. Opinion
 - Components and Evaluation
 - Deductive and Inductive
- God: An Overview
 - Faith and Reason
 - What is at stake?
 - Types of arguments.
- Cosmological Argument
 - Aquinas' "2nd Way" (Cause)
 - Analysis
 - Evaluation

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Faith and Reason

- Questions
 - How rational is religious belief?
 - What reasons do we have to believe in God?
- Whose God?
 - An all-good (**omnibenevolent**), supremely powerful (**omnipotent**), and all-knowing (**omniscient**) creator god who intervenes periodically in the world, and with whom one can enter into a loving relationship, and who is the source of justice and goodness.
 - If God is anything less, why bother...?

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What is at stake?

An entire world view...

- If God exists:
 - The world is the result of a purposeful creation with a specific design for its inhabitants, and is the arena in which human actions will be judged so as to enter into the hereafter and receive their just desserts.
- If God doesn't exist:
 - What?

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Natural vs. Revealed Theology

- **Revealed Theology**
 - takes a text or experience as authoritative and derives conclusions from it.
 - Convinces only the faithful.
- **Natural Theology**
 - relies on human knowledge and reason, not revealed sources to draw conclusions.
 - Intended to convince even the unfaithful.

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Types of Arguments

- **A priori**
 - Arguments that are not based on experience, but reason alone or self-evident principles.
 - Examples:
 - Ontological argument (St. Anselm, Descartes, etc.)
- **A posteriori**
 - Arguments that are based on experience or empirical information about the world.
 - Examples:
 - Cosmological argument ("First Cause")
 - Teleological argument ("Design")
 - Miracles
 - Moral arguments

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Aquinas' "Second Way"

The second way is based on the nature of causation. In the observable world causes are found to be ordered in series; we never observe, nor ever could, something causing itself, for this would mean it preceded itself, and this is not possible. Such a series of causes must however stop somewhere; for in it an earlier member causes an intermediate and the intermediate a last (whether the intermediate be one or many). Now if you eliminate a cause you also eliminate its effects, so that you cannot have a last cause, nor an intermediate one, unless you have a first. Given therefore no stop in the series of causes, and hence no first cause, there would be no intermediate causes either, and no last effect, and this would be an open mistake. One is therefore forced to suppose some first cause, to which everyone gives the name 'God'.

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Analysis

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P1: All things that exist have been caused to exist by something else in an ordered series.

P2: Such a series of causes must stop [begin] somewhere.

C: There exists some first cause, we call God.

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Evaluation

Discussion

- Premise 1:
 - Is it true or acceptable?
- Premise 2:
 - Is it true or acceptable?
- Inference:
 - Do the premises adequately support the conclusion?
- Other Comments: ?

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Next Time

- Read William Rowe, p. 23 on the Cosmological Argument.
- Answer reading questions for Rowe, posted on the course schedule (pdf).
- Think about how Rowe analyzes and evaluates the argument: how similar or different is his account to yours?

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Key concepts

- Omnipotence
- Omnipotence
- Omnibenevolence
- Natural vs. Revealed Theology
- *A priori* and *A posteriori* arguments
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas)
 - Analysis (e.g., standard form)
 - Evaluation

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