

## 1 **The Existence of God (1)**

- Module: Philosophy
- Lesson 9

## 2 **Some Recommended Resources**

- To Everyone an Answer, ed. by Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland. pp. 57-134
- God and Stephen Hawking, by John Lennox
- The Dawkins Delusion, by Alister and Joanna McGrath
- There is a God, by Anthony Flew, (One of the 20th century's leading atheists who came to believe God exists a few years before his death.)
- The Existence of God, by Richard Swinburne.
- Reasonable Faith, by William Lane Craig. pp. 91-204
- The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology, ed. by Craig and Moreland (very advanced material).

## 3 **The Atheists' Arguments**

- Two primary affirmations of atheism.
  - The hiddenness of God disproves God's existence.
  - The problem of evil and suffering disproves God's existence.
- All other atheist arguments are chiefly attempts to negate or deny the arguments for God's existence.
- To succeed in affirming atheism the atheist needs to:
  - Successfully demonstrate the validity of his or her affirmations. [Remember, the burden of proof lies with the one making the claim or affirmation.]
  - Successfully refute the arguments for the existence of God.

## 4 **About Theistic Arguments**

- One needn't know these arguments for God's existence in order to know about and believe in God.
  - Faith in what the Scriptures say about God
  - Calvin's "sensus divinitatus"
  - General revelation of God's invisible attributes (eternal power and divine nature) in the created world (Rom 1:20)
  - Witness of the Holy Spirit

## 5 **About Theistic Arguments**

- Yet these arguments do serve important purposes.
  - They may increase a believer's justification, strengthening his or her confidence and boldness.
  - They assist in answering false ideas and objections which are raised against faith in God.
    - "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." 2 Cor. 10:5

- They may serve to enhance the believer's adoration and worship.

## 6 About Theistic Arguments

- There is a wide array of arguments for God's existence.
  - Alvin Plantinga has identified two dozen arguments and possible arguments in published lecture notes.  
[https://www.meta-religion.com/Philosophy/Articles/Metaphysics/Theistic\\_arguments.htm](https://www.meta-religion.com/Philosophy/Articles/Metaphysics/Theistic_arguments.htm)
  - Richard Swinburne discusses seven arguments in his book *The Existence of God*.
  - Peter Kreeft summarizes twenty arguments for God's existence on his web site.
  - A collection of recognized scholars have developed Plantinga's arguments in a recently published book: *Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God*, ed. by Walls and Daugherty.

## 7 About Theistic Arguments

- Most arguments for God's existence are inductive rather than deductive. (Their conclusion follows probabilistically rather than necessarily from the premises.)
- As such, their persuasiveness is enhanced when used in conjunction with other arguments to strengthen the claim of probability. (Much like making a case in a court of law.)
- With a few exceptions, the arguments should be referred to as arguments, not as proofs of God's existence. (Exceptions would be those which are structured as deductive arguments. e. g. the ontological argument.)

## 8 About Theistic Arguments

- These arguments have limitations.
  - They provide only a partial picture of God. (Such as being the cause of the universe.)
  - Without Scripture (special revelation) we cannot perceive the fuller panorama of God's nature which he wants us to have.
    - Some object that the arguments are not useful because they cannot provide us with the full view of God necessary for salvation.
    - Such an objection wrongly assumes that an incremental approach in reasoning with others is ineffective, off target, or useless.
    - God himself employs an incremental approach when he provides us with general revelation (nature), as well as in the unfolding nature of progressive revelation in Scripture.

## 9 Some Arguments For God's Existence

- The ontological argument(s)
- The cosmological argument(s)

- The teleological argument
- The argument from reason
- The moral argument
- The argument from evil
- The argument from religious experience
- The argument from history and miracles
- The argument from Joy (Desire) (C. S. Lewis)

## 10 The Ontological Arguments

- From the Greek word ontos, having to do with being or existence. Ontology refers to the study of being or existing.
- Originated with Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1000 yrs ago.
- Anselm sought—
  - To demonstrate the existence of God by deductive argument.
  - To deduce the existence of God from the very concept of God.
- The argument's persistence:
  - It has been vigorously attacked, scoffed at, and parodied since it was first articulated by Anselm.
  - Yet it has proved remarkably robust and difficult to disprove.
  - It has experienced a renewed vibrancy among influential theistic philosophers in recent decades, who continue to develop and refine it.

## 11 Understanding Some Terms

- A maximally great being: A being which possesses such excellence or greatness that there is no possibility of anything matching or surpassing its greatness, nor could the being itself become greater.
- Contingent vs. necessary existence:
  - A contingent entity is one that exists because of something else. It has been caused (or is contingent on something else).
  - A necessary entity is one that exists solely because of its own nature. It must necessarily exist.

## 12 Understanding Some Terms

- Possible world(s): Refers to a way the world might have been, a complete description of possible reality, in both its material and immaterial aspects. (Not to merely to some possible planet or version of the earth.)
  - (A "possible world", in this sense, includes not only our planet, but also the entire material cosmos and any non-material reality, such as God, angels, souls, etc., as well as the relationships and states of affairs which exist in that total reality.)

- We often think in terms of possible worlds when we contemplate what our lives would have been like if we had made different choices, or if things had happened differently. (e. g. not met our future spouse, or gone to a different school, or left the house at a different time.)
- The concept of possible worlds is a tool employed in philosophy to explore logical arguments or various ideas or possibilities.

### 13 **Plantinga's Version of the Ontological Argument**

- Premise: It is logically possible a maximally great being (MGB) exists. That is, the concept of a MGB is not logically incoherent or inherently illogical.
  - (In this argument, Plantinga defines a MGB as omniscient, omnipotent, morally perfect, and necessary.)
- Premise: If it is possible that a MGB exists, then it exists in some possible world.
- Premise: If a MGB exists in some possible world, it must exist in all possible worlds. (A factor of its maximal greatness and of its being necessary.)
- Premise: If a MGB exists in every possible world, then it exists in the actual world.
- Conclusion: If a MGB exists in the actual world, then a MGB exists.
- Note: If this argument is sound, then if an atheist or an agnostic concedes the possibility that God exists, by this argument, he exists.

### 14 **An Objection to the Ontological Argument**

- Supposedly, one could "conceive" of anything into existence, such as a maximally great island or a greatest "necessary" lion.
- However—
  - The properties that make up a MGB have intrinsically greatest values (e. g. nothing can be more powerful than omnipotent, or exist in more than every possible world).
    - There are no such maximally great qualities for islands or lions (e.g. the size of a lion, the beauty of an island, etc.).
    - It appears impossible that there would exist in every possible world a necessary lion or island, since these are contingent entities. (e. g. the cosmos moments after it's existence).

### 15 **The Cosmological Arguments**

- Common characteristic: Demonstrate that God exists as the cause of the cosmos.
- Main versions:
  - Kalam

- Thomist
- Leibnizian

• Chiefly argue simply to the existence of a first cause rather than to God per se. (However, given what is necessary for a first cause to cause the cosmos, certain attributes about the first cause can be inferred.)

## 16 **The Cosmological Arguments**

- Seeking to answer the question: "Why is there something, rather than nothing."
- John 1:3 "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

## 17 **The Kalam Cosmological Argument**

- Articulated by Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) of the kalam tradition of Islamic natural philosophy.
  - First originated in Christian and Jewish philosophy.
  - Transmitted to Islamic philosophy as a result of the Muslim conquest.
  - Eventually returned to Christian philosophy.

## 18 **The Kalam Cosmological Argument**

- Premise 1: Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
- Premise 2: The universe began to exist.
- Conclusion: Therefore the universe has a cause.

## 19 **Premise 1**

**"Whatever begins to exist has a cause."**

- It appears to be intuitively true. (A "brute fact")
- Some are now trying to disprove this premise (especially in the realm of science).
- Such attempts have so far failed on both philosophical and scientific/mathematical grounds.

## 20 **Premise 2**

**"The universe began to exist."**

- Premise 2 has strong support from both philosophy and science.
- Support from philosophy:
  - Impossibility of the existence of an actual infinite number of things.
    - The present universe stands at the end of a sequence of temporal events.
    - An actual infinite number of things cannot exist (Hilbert's Hotel).
    - A beginningless regress of temporal events implies an actual infinite number of things.
    - Therefore, a beginningless regress of temporal events cannot exist, hence the universe began to exist.

- The Impossibility of forming an actual number of infinite things by adding one member after another—hence, the impossibility of an infinite regress.

21  **Premise 2**

**"The universe began to exist."**

- Support from science
  - The evidence from the expanding universe.
    - Extrapolating backwards, space, matter, and time ultimately shrink into an infinitely small event (called the "boundary" of the universe).
    - (For many years many scientists resisted the evidence of an expanding universe precisely because it implied the universe had a cause beyond itself and thus lent credibility to theism.)

22  **Premise 2**

**"The universe began to exist."**

- Support from science (cont.)
  - The principle of thermodynamics.
    - In a closed system, things tend toward a state of equilibrium. Unless energy is fed into a system, it will eventually run down and quit.
    - If the universe always existed (is infinitely old) it would have reached a state of equilibrium an infinite time ago, and would be thermodynamically dead.
    - Thus the universe must have begun a finite time ago, and was infused with energy and order (from where? by whom?).

23  **What Follows From This Argument?**

- Romans 1:20—God's invisible attributes.
  - They are "clearly seen."
  - Seen through what has been made.

24  **What Follows From This Argument?**

- What are some of the attributes of the First Cause implied by the creation of the cosmos?
  - Transcendent (immaterial, spaceless, timeless)
  - Uncaused (necessary)
  - Immensely powerful (omnipotent)
  - Immeasurably wise

25  **What Follows From This Argument?**

- Personal

- Only two kinds of entities that transcend space and time are believed to possibly exist: 1) abstract entities (such as numbers, propositions, properties, etc.), and 2) personal minds.
- By their definition, abstract entities (if they exist) do not stand in causal relationship to events or things. (They do not cause things to exist or events to occur.)
- Hence, only a personal mind could have caused the universe to exist.
- Free (If the Cause were not free to decide to cause, but did so necessarily, then the effect (the cosmos) would be co-eternal with the Cause.) Since the cosmos is not eternal, the Cause must have been free to act.

## 26 What Follows From This Argument?

- So—
  - Though the cosmological argument does not specify the identity of the Cause of the cosmos...
  - Yet the existence and the nature of the effect (the cosmos) necessarily implies certain attributes of the nature of the Cause. (Using abductive reasoning.)
  - Those necessary attributes align well with how the bible describes God.

## 27 Next Week:

- The Existence of God, part 2
- More arguments for the existence of God.