

Philosophy of Religion

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Abstract

Philosophy of religion is one of the most fascinating areas of philosophy. It addresses not only the perennial question Is there a God? But also the questions if there is, then what is he like? And, most important of all, what does that mean for us?

These are questions that everyone should ask themselves at some point. This paper attempts to demystify the philosophy of religion, and so to help people to reach views on these questions

KEYWORDS: God, St. Anslem, Ontological, Teleological, Religion, Kant, St. Thomas Aquinas

Is There a God?

The first section of the paper, Arguments for the existence of God, explains the classic arguments for a positive answer to the question Is there a God? The debate concerning God's existence has, of course, been going on for millennia. That does not mean, however, that no progress has been made. Some of the classic arguments for God's existence have been largely abandoned, others have been refined, and new arguments or points about arguments do regularly appear. The search for an answer to the question of God's existence should not be written off as futile simply because the question is an old one.

If we think is there a God, then needs to answer some questions, which exists in mind like

- What does the word "God" mean to you?
- Do you believe in a God?
- If so, where does this belief come from? (If not, where does this belief come from?)
- What is the purpose of (a) God?
- Is God and religion the same thing?
- Can the Universe exist with a God? (why/why not)
- Is morality/ethics tied to the belief in a God?

Why do People believe in God?

- Religion includes God as part of their belief system.
- Parents instill the idea.
- Conclude on their own existence of a supreme being.
- Life makes sense with God
- Explains why humans exist
- To keep things in the universe in Harmony and under control.

Some Terms to Know...

- Theism- the belief in a god or gods.

- Atheism- the absence of belief in God, or an active disbelief in God, which means they don't believe in God

God's Divine Attributes

- **Omnipotence:** , (meaning "One having unlimited power or authority.")
 - God is perceived doctrinally as all-powerful.
 - God can do anything.
 - God created the world ex-nihilo (from nothing)
- **Omniscience:** , ("knowing everything that can be known.")
 - God is all-knowing.
 - God just knows
 - God knows miraculously. God Knows in a way beyond our understanding.

Immutability:

- Unchanging God.
- **Eternally:**
 - God exists at any moment of time.
- **Omni benevolence:**
 - God is all good.

And also, omnipresent, meaning "the state of being everywhere at once

If there is a God, then what is He Like?

If they are successful, then none of the classic arguments for God's existence proves exactly the same thing.

Arguments for Existence...

- Ontological argument
- Cosmological argument
- Teleological argument

The ontological argument, for instance, purports to prove the existence of a perfect being; the cosmological argument purports to prove the existence of a necessary or eternal Creator; the teleological argument purports to prove the existence of a Creator concerned with humanity. Each of these arguments, then, bears not only on the question of God's existence, but also on the question of his nature, of what he is like.

Ontological argument

- Saint Anselm, defines God "is that than which nothing greater can be thought". God is the greatest possible thing we can conceived,
- His logical argument is a Reduction to Absurdity- the negation of the conclusion leads to an absurdity.
- The concept of GOD is of a being no greater that which can be conceived. But a being which exists is greater than a being which is merely conceived; if GOD did not exist, GOD would be a being no greater that which can be conceived, THEREFORE, GOD exists.

Main Points of Anselm's Argument:

- **There are two types of existence:** We can conceive of things that exist in reality, but we can also conceive of things that do not.
- **That which exists in the mind could possibly exist in reality.** The fact that we are able to conceive of a being that is capable of performing acts that we, as mere

mortals, are not, at least points to its possibility, even if you are unable to understand all of its attributes.

- **Things that exist in reality are greater than those that exist in the mind.** Anselm suggests that if you can conceive of something greater in the mind and that there is a possibility that it exists, then its existence would be greater than a figment of someone's imagination.

Main Points of Anselm's Argument: II

- God only exists in the mind. If we accept the definition of God, 'a being than which none greater can be conceived' and we also accept the argument that a being that exists in reality is considerably greater than one than exists in the mind, then God must exist. God in reality is far greater than God in the mind.
- God exists both in reality and in the mind. Provided we accept the possibility of the greatest being, and that which exists in reality is greater than that which exists in the mind, then God, as the greatest being cannot exist only in the mind.

Another way to think of it...

- Anselm in effect defines God as a perfect being
- A perfect being must have *all perfections*– omnipotence, omniscience, Omni benevolence...
- Existence is a perfection (or so Anselm seems to say)
- Therefore, God must have existence – God must exist
- To deny this is self-contradictory
- It would be like saying: "Triangles have three sides by definition, but there is a triangle with only two sides"

The Cosmological Argument

St Thomas Aquinas

Everything that exists must have a cause.

The universe exists, therefore it must have a cause.

This "first cause" is God.

Argument's premises

- Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.
- The universe began to exist.
- Therefore, the universe has some kind of cause of its existence.
- The cause of the universe is either an impersonal cause or a personal one.
- The cause of the universe is not impersonal.
- Therefore, the cause of the universe is a personal one, which we call God.

Existence of God can be proved in five ways:

- Argument from Motion
- Efficient Cause
- Possibility and Necessity
- Gradation to be found in things
- Governance of things
- **Argument from Motion**

Would not it be much easier to say that there is a beginning? Let's be empirical: when we observe the world we see that everything has a cause: the rain causes the plants to grow, the plants cause the production of oxygen, oxygen causes animal life to exist, etc. Does not follow from this that the whole universe,

too, has a cause? Aristotle, rejecting Plato' concept of the Forms, believed that everything must have an efficient cause; the efficient cause was the "Unmoved Mover"

- **Efficient Cause**

Aristotle was a major influence on Thomas Aquinas who developed the causal argument as part of his Christian beliefs. Basically, Aquinas stated that if A causes B, and B causes C, then A is the first cause, and C is the last cause. But what happens if A does not occur? Neither B nor C will occur either. The causal chain must, therefore, have a beginning, and that beginning is God.

From Possibility to Necessity

- In Nature things that are possible are either, to be - they are created, or not to be, they are destroyed; it is impossible for them to always exist, if this is possible, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence.
- For something to exist, its existence begins by something already existing.
- If at one time Nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist... and now nothing would be in existence, but there are things that exist, therefore, not all being are merely possible, but must be something which existence is necessary.
- Every necessary thing is caused by another.
- We must admit the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity - GOD, causing others to exist.

Argument of Perfection

Things in the world are in gradation, less or more, good, noble, hot- therefore there must be something that is best, noblest, hottest, and something, which is MOST BEING - PERFECTION, and that is GOD.

Governance of Things

- Things that lack being (imperfect), as natural bodies act for an end, to obtain the best result.
- They achieve their goal not by chance, but by design.
- Who ordered things to their end, directed them, GOD, in the same way that 'the arrow is directed by the archer'.

The Teleological Argument

Teleological comes from the Greek word '*telos*' – meaning 'design' or 'purpose'

Argument: in its broadest sense it is an argument to support that the universe is *designed*; not necessarily the creation of a theistic God. When the Greeks spoke of a cosmic designer they obviously had no idea of the God conceived by the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions. In examining the Design

Argument, therefore, we need to divide it into two parts: firstly, the argument in support of a '**Theistic God**'; secondly, the argument in support of a '**Cosmic Design**'

THE ARGUMENT

- Premises:
 - The purposive organization of man-made object is evidence of the intelligence and purpose of the maker.

- The world contains many natural objects (plants, animals, human body, etc.) whose organization is clearly purposive and the world itself is purposely organized.
- Conclusion:
 - By analogy, there must be a maker of the universe who has made it accordingly to a PLAN. The world maker/creator, is God.
- The argument was elaborated by the Archdeacon of Carlisle **William Paley** (1743-1805) in his book Natural Theology.

William Paley's argument from design.

argued that the complexity & efficiency of natural objects (ex. the eye, the brain, etc.) are evidence that they must have been purposefully designed.

How else could they have come to be as they are – perfectly adapted for the purpose they serve?

Paley uses a watch & its maker to draw an **analogy**.

Just by looking at a watch and all its intricate parts working together in unison, we can tell that it was designed by a watchmaker. So, just by examining the complexity of the eye and how it suits its purpose so well (to see), it must have been designed by some sort of 'Divine Watchmaker' (God).

Kant's Moral Argument

- argued that man must assume the existence of God and life after death if he is to make sense of his desire for happiness and his moral duty.
- believed that the uniting of man's desire for happiness with man's moral duty could not occur in this life or without God's power. Therefore, it is morally necessary (not rationally necessary) to assume God's existence.
 - It's rational to be moral only if it's rewarded
 - That doesn't happen in this life
 - It must happen in another life
 - So, there must be an afterlife, and a just God

The Formal Moral Argument

- 1) Morality consists of a set of commands.
(2) For every command there is a commander.
Therefore:
(3) There is a commander that commanded morality.
(4) Commands only carry as much authority as does their commander.
(5) Morality carries ultimate authority.
Therefore:
(6) The commander that commanded morality carries ultimate authority.
(7) Only God carries ultimate authority.
Therefore:
(8) The commander that commanded morality is God.
Therefore:
(9) God exists.

The Perfectionist Moral Argument

- 1) We ought to be morally perfect.
(2) If we ought to be morally perfect, then we can be morally perfect.
(3) We cannot be morally perfect unless God exists.

Therefore:

(4) God exists

- takes the fact that there is a gap between our moral duties and what we are capable of doing to imply the existence of God.
- we cannot achieve moral perfection by our own strength, but we can do so with God's help, which is available to us. God can forgive us; God can take the punishment for our sins; God can restore us to righteousness

Conclusion

Philosophy of religion is a flourishing field. Beyond those specific areas described above, Along with arguments for the existence of God, there are also a number of reasons one might have for denying the existence of God. One reason is that a person just does not find the arguments for God's existence to be sufficiently compelling. If the burden is on the theist to provide highly convincing evidences or reasons that would warrant his or her believing that God exists, in the absence of such evidences and reasons disbelief is justified. Another reason one might have for not believing that God exists is that science conflicts with theistic beliefs and, given the great success of the scientific enterprise, it should have the last word on the matter. Since science has regularly rebuffed religious claims in the past, we should expect the claims of religion to eventually become extinct.

A third possible reason for denying the existence of God is that the very concept of God is incoherent. And a fourth reason one might have is that the existence of God conflicts with various features of the natural world, such as evil, pain, and suffering.

If the God of theism does not exist, then all meaning might be said to derive from human values. According to Protagoras, without God, "man is the measure of all things." Without a personal God, we might conclude that all creative and technological accomplishments are monuments to human potential and should be celebrated as the legacies one generation leave to the next so that continuous progress is possible. We are responsible to ourselves and to our fellow travelers to behave reasonably and to be true to our human nature. The purpose of life is what we bring to it; our dreams and hopes for a better present and brighter future.

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