

Lecture 4: Aquinas's First Four Ways

Arguments from Motion and Causality

Both arguments rely on simple common observations

Motion: In the natural world there are objects in motion.

Cause: The natural world includes events that occur.

"Natural world" = the world of perception, experiences and sensation

Both arguments deny the plausibility of infinite causal chains.

Basic form:

If there are no infinite causal chains, then all chains must have a beginning.

If the chains have a beginning it must be caused by something supernatural (outside the natural world.) Otherwise, that event would need a cause *a la* premise 1.

This supernatural cause would be God.

Sober's Objections:

1. *Just because it has a supernatural cause does not imply that the cause is an All powerful, all knowing, all benevolent God.*

Reply: Aquinas's notion of a cause is somewhat different from ours, he thinks the cause must in some way "contain" the effect.

Ex. The acorn is the cause of the oak tree. The acorn must "contain" the form of the oak tree (it is the *formal cause*). In modern terms the acorn must contain the genetic blueprint for the oak tree. However, modern physics does not demand this of all causes (Ex. The water which douses the flame does not contain "steam")

2. *Saying that all chains must have a beginning does not imply that they all have the very same beginning. (Birthday Fallacy).*

Ex. We all have a day on which we were born our birthdays. But we do not all have the very same birthday.

(Note a possible equivocation on the use of "a birthday")

Reply: Aquinas thinks a single first cause is more plausible than numerous ones. It is more elegant, and more simple. But are those good reasons?

Other possible reasons: If there were more than one first cause why do we not see new first causes? If there were more than one first cause we might expect the world to be more chaotic and less well organized.

3. *Why not have a infinite chain of causes? Can't the universe be infinitely old?*

Reply: Aquinas claims that if a causal chain has no first member then it cannot have any subsequent members. Suppose the following chain $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$, if no A then no B or C.

But: This is another equivocation. Saying a chain has no beginning does not mean that some event has no cause, it means that there is no event has no cause. There is no beginning because the chain continues to stretch, there is no one event that started it all.

Reply: There is something puzzling about an infinite chain, or an infinitely old universe. Why should such a thing exist if there is no reason for it to in the first place.

Third Argument: Contingency

Terminology:

Necessary: A claim is necessary if it applies in all cases, and must be. There are necessary truths and necessary falsehoods (logical impossibilities).

Examples of *necessary truths*.

2	If P then Q	No Married Men
<u>+3</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>are Bachelors</u>
5	Q	

Examples of *necessary falsehoods*:

2	P and Not-P	Steve is a bachelor
<u>+3</u>		and is married.
6		

Contingent: A claim which could possible be true or false but is not necessarily one or other is contingent. Most truths are contingent.

Examples of *contingent truths*.

- Steve is 5'10" (I could have been an inch shorter)
- Raleigh is the capitol of North Carolina (it could have been Charlotte)
- The atomic weight of Hydrogen is 1.00797 (it could have been 2.03)

Examples of *contingent falsehoods*:

- Steve has type AB-Neg blood (he could have but he doesn't)
- There is a cat seven stories tall (it is logically possible, but practically impossible)

Logically Possible: The claim does not imply a contradiction. Even if there is no case that is actually occurs (e.g. 7 story cats).

Possible Worlds: A "possible world" is just a fancy way of saying that something is logically possible.

Ex. There is a possible world where I wore a blue shirt instead of a red one.

But there is no possible world where I am both married and a bachelor.
(the latter implies a contradiction, the former does not).

Note: When we talk about logical possibility we are talking about the concepts, not the words. It is possible that there is a world where the word "Five" means what we call "Four." But that does not mean that the concepts of 5 and 4 mean the same. We can talk about the words and the concepts as different. If I write the word "Rabbit" and erase it, I have not destroyed a real rabbit, just the word.

So it is logically possible for me to say " $2 + 3 = 6$ " but it is not possible for the numbers themselves to mean the same thing they do in English and for the statement to be true. It is logically impossible.

Aquinas's argument.

Contingent beings seem to be ones which may or may not exist. He suggested that we know something is contingent by the fact that it does exist sometimes and does not others.

If all beings were contingent, and all contingent beings do not exist at some point, then there ought to have been a point in the past where no contingent beings existed. And if there were no beings at all at such a time, then no beings could exist after that (since nothing can come from nothing).

But there are beings (including contingent beings) so there must be some necessary being (one that must exist). That is God.

Form of the argument. Reductio Ad Absurdum.

Either A or B

If A then C

C is Absurd (patently false)

B

Reductios let us prove one thing by showing that the only other alternative is absurd.

Sober's Objections:

1. *Just because things are contingent does not mean that they cannot be eternal (that they must cease to exist).*

Ex. Elementary particles (the constituents of matter) are alleged to be eternal.

They cannot be created or destroyed, only reorganized. But any particular particle is contingent (it might not have existed at all). We can imagine a possible world lacking that one particle without contradiction. So they are not necessary

2. *Birthday fallacy again. Even if every contingent being does fail to exist at some point, there might not be any one time that no contingent being exists (so long as their existences overlap See pg.46)*

Ex. Every TV show has a beginning and an end. It does not follow that at some point during the day there is no TV show on, since they overlap.

3. *Just because there must be necessary beings does not mean that they are God(s).*

Ex. Numbers might be necessary beings, but they are not God.

Aquinas's Fourth Argument: From Degrees

The gist of the argument is this: we see that things have qualities in degrees.

There must be some thing which has that quality to the maximum degree. The thing that has all qualities to the highest degree is God.

Ex. Some things are more red than others. The thing that is the most red possible contains only the color red (no other shades). Things that are less red contain red mixed with other colors.

Objections:

1. *There needn't be anything that is maximally red (or any other quality).*

Ex. If Chaplin is funny, it is not necessary that there is a maximally funny person.

2. *Birthday fallacy again. Even if there is a maximal exemplar of every quality, it is not obvious that one being is the maximal exemplar of all qualities.*

3. *Contradictory properties. Some qualities seem contradictories (red and green, tall and short, good and evil). How can one be the maximal exemplar of both contradictories?*

Reply: Perhaps some alleged qualities are in fact the absences or privations of other qualities. Shortness the privation of tallness, evil the privation of good.

Colors don't seem that way, but maybe there is something we do not understand about them.

Review Questions:

1. First cause God
 Birthday Fallacy
 Why no infinite chain?
2. Everyone has a day on which they were born.
 Therefore, there is one day on which everyone was born.
 (Not everyone has to have the very same day of birth)
 Aquinas frequently uses this argument to suppose that from everything needing causes, or having an exemplar, or quality, that there is some entity which is the one cause, exemplar, or holder of that quality a.k.a God.
3. Necessary being: A being which must exist in all possible worlds.
 Contingent being: A being which does not exist in all possible worlds.
 Possible world: A state of affairs which does not imply some contradiction.
4. The claim is that necessary beings would be eternal since there is no state of affairs in which they do not exist, they must exist. This assumes that different times count as different possible worlds, I am not sure that is true.
5. A reductio tries to prove something by showing that the alternative leads to something absurd or patently false.
 1. A or not-A
 2. If not-A then B
 3. Not-B
 Suppose Not-A
 Then B (by 2)
 And Not-B (by 3)
 Therefore B and Not-B (absurdity, logically impossible)
 Therefore A
6. We need not be certain of an expression for it to be necessary.
 Ex. The expression "P or Q" is the equivalent of "if Not P then Q"
 You might not be certain of it. But it is necessary nonetheless. So in some cases no one may know whether something is true or not, but it still might be necessary.
 Ex. Pi has no last digit. If it is true is it probably necessary, but we don't know.
 Necessity is objective in that it does not rely on anyone's knowledge or belief for it to be necessary.
7. Perhaps the first cause was the *Big Bang*, unintelligent, of limited (albeit great) power, and neutral with regard to goodness.
 Numbers and necessary truths are necessary but they are not God.

Problems for further thought.

1. If we imagine natural to not include any artifact, we could explain things as being uncaused such as free willed beings.
2. Tough one. I am not sure if something can be necessary and non-eternal. In a limited sort of way some things imply the exist of others. A child implies a parent, but a child's existence does not necessarily mean the parent *still* exists.
 (Of course, the child doesn't necessarily exist).

Lecture 5: The Design Argument*Basic Argument:*

- (1) We see that there are things in the world that act for an end. Some have minds and some do not.
 - (2) If it acts for an end, either it has a mind, or it is designed by something with a mind.
- =====
- (3) There must be mind which created all the mindless things which act towards an end.

C God exists

Acting for an end is opposed to acting randomly or with no goal. Goal directed behavior.

Two kinds of Design Argument

Global: The universe is a well designed, ordered and functioning machine.

Local: This rabbit is a well designed system.

Paley's watch: O. There is watch on a beach.

H₁ It was created by the random motions of the waves and wind.

H₂ It was made by a person and dropped on the beach.

H₁ Far more plausible, expected. H₂ very surprising.

Any part of nature is far more complex than the watch. Therefore it is far more likely to be the result of design. Therefore nature is the product of design.

Analogy

1. It does not matter that we don't understand it.
2. Or that the watch is sometimes wrong
3. Nor that some parts we don't understand the purpose of.
4. Nor that it is logically possible that the random hypothesis is possible
5. Nor that there are laws which could account for it.
6. It is not convincing that the watch's shape merely makes of think it was designed.
7. No less suprising would be the random hypothesis
8. No knowledge about it at all would still not be evidence it was random.

Hume's Criticisms

Hume only knew of deductive and inductive and argument by analogy.

Analogy: Arguments from analogy have inferential strength equal to the similarity of the analog and target. Watch and Universe not very similar.

Sober's criticism: Not overall similarity but relevant similarity.

Induction: very small sample size for determining that the universe is designed.

(All universes seen so far have been designed, therefore this universe was designed)

Sober's criticism: Not inductive at all.

Is there an inductive argument against design?

Review Questions:

1. The design argument seeks to explain why things are the way they are. Thus it is abductive.
2. Global design arguments point out the intricacy of nature and inter-relations of all the creatures and phenomena (Aquinas uses these).
Local design arguments point out the intricacy and purposefulness of individual creatures or things and say that they cannot be explained by random causes (Paley's arguments are local)
3. It would be highly surprising if something like a watch were to just happen. But not surprising at all that it should be designed and built.
Likewise, it would be surprising if something like a rabbit were to just happen. But not surprising if some super intelligence created it.
4. Whatever the degree of similarity between the target and analog, that is the strength of the argument of analogy.
5. It is a poor inductive argument (since it counts all other known universes 0)
It is a poor analogy since watches and rabbits are very different. And Watches and the Universe are exceedingly different.
No. Those things are similar enough with regard to their relevant characteristics.

Problems for Further Thought.

1. Not really. The same would hold for artifacts we find on Mars despite never having seen a Martian.
2. Functions might simply be given to things by people. Or in the case of the heart, the function seems to be determined by other forces (DNA), whereas rains existed long before people had crops.

Lecture 7: Can Science Explain Everything?

Why questions cannot be answered if they ask why the whole history of the universe was as it was.

We can ask local why questions, which ask about specific events.

Science can't ask why there is a whole universe.

Leibniz. Best of all possible worlds. (Minimal laws, maximal diversity)

Clark: Either the universe exists as it is for no reason, or God made it. Therefore God made it.

Both seem to make the Only game in Town Fallacy.

Maybe we just don't and can't know why our universe is the way it is.

Anthropomorphic answer. Our universe is this way, because it is the universe in which we arose to ask the question.

There is also another way that people use this fallacy against evolution.

Science has yet to answer some questions, such as why there are two sexes for most creatures on Earth instead of one or three. Lacking an explanation from science, they say that the bible offers an explanation so it must be right.

Causality and the Super Natural.

Invoking a God or other super natural seems to avoid these conundrums because the answer is simply God did it. But that answer is only satisfying if you have independent reason to believe there is a God. It hardly constitutes evidence for God's existence. That said. If you do have independent reason to believe in God, tradition for example, then it does seem more satisfactory.

Review Questions:

1. Global why-questions are not answerable in terms of cause of effect within the terms available to the theory, whereas local why-questions are answerable in the same terms.
Ex. Local why question: "Why do children look like their parents?"
Ex Global why question: "Why are there living beings?"
2. No. Because it cannot use the causal model (or other means) to explain or find the answers to global questions. Those things are outside the purview of science.
3. Yes. We know gravity exists, but we cannot explain why.
4. We can't explain Gravity. But that is no reason by itself to support the claim that God wants things to fall or that God makes them do so.
5. Causes always precede effects by definition. Things which happen are described as happening at some place in some time, otherwise we wouldn't know that they happened. For an event to be caused, the cause itself is a happening, so it must take place in space and time.
Supernatural causation presumably doesn't take place in space and time. And yet it is alleged to be causation. If it isn't, then a whole other set of explanations about how God causes things to happen is needed.

Lecture 8: The Ontological Argument

Definitions:

A priori: Before experience. A claim is a priori if it does not rely on any experience or perception to be known. Known by reason alone.

Ex. All squares are rectangles. (by definition)

A posteriori: After experience. A claim is a posteriori if it is known only after experience or perception. Known by perception.

Ex. Steve is 5'10" tall. (need to measure me to know)

The Ontological argument is an a priori argument. From the very definition of God we know that he exists.

Argument:

1. God is by definition the greatest possible being.
2. A being who fails to exist in the actual world (while existing in other possible worlds) is less perfect than a being who exists in all possible worlds.
Hence, God exists necessarily.

Note: Actually Anselm says God is the being no greater than which can be conceived. I think Sober is right that Anselm meant the greatest possible being but there may be other interpretations.

So far the argument looks deductively valid. But perhaps we are not confident about the premises.

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	Necessary	Contingent
A priori	$2 + 2 = 4$	I think therefore I exist
A posteriori	All life on earth is carbon based	Steve is 5'10" tall

Guanilo's criticism:

Just defining something as perfect does not make it exist.

(1) A P-island is by definition the greatest possible island

(2) An island which fails to exist in the actual world is less perfect than an island that exists in all possible worlds

P-island exists.

There are no P-islands, so there must be something wrong with that argument.

Since validity is dependent on form alone, the Island argument and Ontological argument must both be either valid or not valid. They have exactly the same form.

Maybe the second premise isn't true of the island argument though true of the ontological argument. But why not?

Kant: existence is not a property.

Existence is not a property, but a claim about some kind of things.

Unicorns have the property of having one horn and there are no instances of unicorns.

But non-existence is not one of their properties. Likewise of Dinosaurs.

But is that so clear? Sober points out that the jury is still out with regard to existence claims. It might be that existence is best thought of as a property or that existence is not a property but rather a claim that can be made of something.

One way to think of a property is to say that some thing has some property.

So a tiger has stripes.

But what is it that something has if it exists.

A tiger has existence? That seems somewhat vague. But it is worth considering.

Basic concern. In effect Anselm has defined God as existing. If I define "snarks" as existing then I can say that snarks exist, since after all by definition they exist. Or I might define Peta Wilson as a beautiful blond actress who loves me. Then by definition Peta Wilson loves me. Of course, that does not mean the person you refer to as Peta Wilson loves me.

Conclusion: All that we get from Anselm's argument is that if God exists then he exists necessarily. (Sort of like the idea that if there is a prime number over 10^{234} then it necessarily exists. But that doesn't mean that it does.

Review Questions

1. A priori claims are known by reason alone, a posteriori need some perception or experience.
 Innate knowledge is knowledge that we are born with, a priori knowledge we may need to learn, but once learned is not dependent on any experience.
 A posteriori claim: There are doves in the world.
 A priori claim: I exist.
2. We might not be able to conceive of all possible things. But everything truly conceivable is possible (not contradictory).
3. It has the same form, but it is clearly wrong since there are no P-islands.
 Shows that something is true because the alternative is impossible.
 Either the Ontological Argument form is Valid or Not Valid
 If it is valid, if the premises are true it will have a true conclusion.
 The P-island argument has the same form, but even if the premises were true, we would not believe conclusion (because it is false).
 Therefore it is not valid. Therefore the Ontological argument is not valid.
4. Existence claims are about concepts. Whereas properties are about the things the concepts describes.
 Maybe but he doesn't give much reason beyond the assertion.
5. No. Simply defining a thing doesn't make it exist.

Lecture 9: Is the Existence of God Testable?

Logical Positivism. A philosophical tradition from the 1920s which holds (held really) that for a statement to be true (or false) it had to be provable by experience or by logic. Metaphysical claims (synthetic a priori) were forbidden. Only logic and empirical claims were allowed.

Ex. "God exists" is a meaningless sentence.

Testability: For a sentence to be meaningful there must be a test by which we could discover whether it was true or not.

Analyticity: A definition or deduction from a definition (tautology).

All squares are rectangles

Either it is Monday or it is not Monday.

Positivists believe all *a priori* claims are *analytic*.

Synthetic: Positivists believe all *a posteriori* claims are *synthetic*.

Falsifiability: Does not mean that a hypothesis is false.

A hypothesis is falsifiable if there is some possible observation which would refute the theory.

Ex. Non-falsifiable theory: *Invisible elves cause all rainfall. They are invisible and show up when conditions are right (humidity / pressure etc..) and then cause the rain to fall.*

There is no evidence which could disconfirm that.

Ex. Falsifiable. *The Planet Vulcan?*

Probably no hypothesis is falsifiable by itself. It requires a number of auxiliary assumptions to make it falsifiable.

Auxiliary Assumptions:

These are additional assumptions that round out the hypothesis. They might be as broad as saying all known physics, math etc.. are basically correct (as in the case of Mercury), or they might be more specific (Fairies have never been accurately recorded).

They should be established independently (and checkable independent) of the hypothesis.

How does this work for God's existence?

We need to assume that a god would make the world this way instead of some other way, and come to that conclusion independently of the assertion that god exists and things are this way.

Review Questions

1. It is far more probable that an eyewitness is lying, was deceived or is crazy than the laws of physics or nature were somehow broken.
2. Yes. It must be in principle testable. No, if there is no way to test it than it is meaningless. No. Claims about the past make predictions such as what we are likely to find if we dig in the ground, so they are in theory testable.
3. Because some mystics claim religious experience is entirely ineffable, beyond all description. If that is true, then the claims will not run contrary to any scientific ones.

Lecture 11: The Argument from Evil

First Version:

If god is exists, it would be All-PKG (all knowing, all powerful, all good).

If an All-PKG existed there would be no evil.

There is evil

God does not exist.

Two kinds of evils:

Man-made evil (the results of human actions)

Natural evils (natural catastrophes, earthquakes, floods, etc..)

Possible objections: Since the argument is valid, one must challenge a premise to challenge the argument.

1. Maybe there is no evil. (seems unlikely)
2. Maybe God isn't All-PKG (not by definition anyway, but also unlikely)
3. Maybe premise 2 is false. Can God permit evil?

Theodicy: To show how are God's being all-PKG and the existence of evil consistent?
Or at least show why we don't know premise 2.

Soul-building evils. A good God may want some evils because they help build the souls of people. They give you a better character. But are all evils soul-building?

If some evils are soul building is premise 2 false? Maybe but maybe not.

If God is all powerful why does he need evil to build our souls?

Perhaps he does so to give us the opportunity to be proud of our accomplishment. That may be enough to make Premise 2 false.

Second Version: remove premise 2 add the following.

(4) If an all PKG god were to exist, then the amount of evil would not exceed a soul-building amount.

(5) The amount of evil exceeds a soul building amount.

Hence there is no God.

Free Will? Does human free will require the possibility of there being more evil than the soul building amount (couldn't God limit free evil actions to be to the number that helps build souls?). Maybe it does require more than the soul building amount (hard to say really). But that does not explain the kinds of evil that are not a consequence of Human Free Will (natural catastrophes).

Third Version: (replace 2 and 4 with)

(6) In an all PKG being existed then there would be no more evil than the minimum required for soul building and as a consequence of human nature.

(7) The quantity of evil exceeds that needed for free will and soul building.

Hence there is no God.

Perhaps there is some greater good outside our ability to comprehend that is achieved only through the existence of that evil.

All of the Versions seem to require that we would know what an All-PKG god would allow and what such a being would find necessary, when of course such things are outside our sphere of understanding.

We really have no way of testing the hypothesis that a Good God would not allow evil, so we are hardly able to challenge the claims. The arguments against God's existence suffer the same problem as those for its existence.

Review Questions:

1. Sober doesn't think the All-PKG constitutes a definition of God, since there are conceptions of Gods which are not All-PKG. Greeks, Zoroastrian, Hindu.
But it need not be a definition to be true. I live in Raleigh, but it is not part of the definition of me that I do.
2. I think Sober showed that it did not.
3. Evils may serve to build character, to inspire greatness, to cause us to be virtuous etc..
4. Maybe. But there seem to be far more cases of evil than are necessary for those purposes.
5. Theodicy tries to show why something is true or false (in this case the premise 2) Defenses merely try to show that we have no reason to believe something false or not true.
Claim: People are intrinsically self centered.
Theodicy: If people were self centered we could explain human behavior in terms of evolution and that would be consistent with most animal behavior.
Defense: Even the most altruistic acts can be thought of as self serving, gifts can be done to earn favors, help might be done to improve self esteem.
6. All Sober says is that we have no way of knowing whether premise 6 (how much evil an All-PKG god would permit). That ignorance is enough to question whether the third argument is convincing.

Problems for Further Thought:

1. Omnipotence suggests the power to do anything. But most theologians would agree that even omnipotence can be limited by logical possibility. Thus God cannot make a cat that is not a cat, and if the possibility of evil is necessary for free will, then he could not make free will without evil. Of course, he did not have to make free will.
2. There is the Leibniz answer. There is evil, but the amount is the least possible of all possible worlds. Of course, this seems highly dubious given the seemingly contingent quality of most evil.
3. It is unclear why that should cause all non-human evil, but assuming it did (or there is no such thing), then it seems to address why that happened. Although one might ask why God made it so (Why put all evils into one little apple)
4. Obs. "There is evil in the world. "
H₁ An All-PKG God permitted it because it was necessary for free will and soul building.
H₂ Creatures evolved with few if any constraints on their behaviors, some of which are cruel and unjust.