

Tsephania Sanon

Louis Sanchez

Alliance University

Philosophy

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Philosophy Questions Lesson 7

Aquinas. "The Five Proofs of God" - pp. 348-351 (the first three arguments are all versions of the "Cosmological Argument" in favor of God's existence)

- 1) In your own words, explain the Cosmological Argument for God's existence in terms of motion and (similarly) cause and effect.

Aquinas' Cosmological Argument proves God's existence using motion, cause, and effect. Observing nature suggests a first cause or prime mover. Aquinas believed that everything in motion had a cause. Since there must be a first mover, this chain cannot continue forever. Aquinas also uses cause-and-effect reasoning. He claims that every effect and cause has causes. This chain of causes cannot continue forever. It starts with the uncaused cause or first cause. God is Aquinas' first cause. Aquinas' Cosmological Argument posits a first cause or prime mover to explain the universe's existence rationally and concludes that God is the source of all motion and causation.

- 2) What does an "infinite regress" mean, and why is it so central to the Cosmological argument?

An "infinite regress" is a chain of causes or explanations that never ends. Infinite regress challenges the idea that the universe has an endless chain of causes and effects. Aquinas believes that an infinite regress is logically and practically impossible because it would explain the cosmos and its manifestations poorly. Aquinas' Cosmological Argument requires a prime mover by rejecting the endless regress. Aquinas believes everything in the universe has a beginning since an infinite regress is impossible. God, the ultimate cause of the universe, is the first cause. The Cosmological Argument stresses God's role in the genesis and nature of the cosmos by denying the possibility of an infinite regress.

- 3) How is the "third" of the five ways about the contingent existence of everything in the universe?

The argument from contingency, the third of Aquinas' Five Ways, argues that everything in the cosmos is contingent. The presence of a contingent creature is not necessary. Aquinas claims that everything in the universe is contingent since it could disappear. According to Aquinas, if everything in the universe is contingent, then nothing exists. Without reason, nothing could exist. Since contingent creatures require a non-contingent or necessary entity, this contradicts logic. The argument from contingency proposes a necessary entity that gives all contingent entities existence. This necessary being creates everything and is independent. Aquinas calls this necessary being God, who underpins all existence and explains the existence of contingent beings. The third of the Five Ways highlights the need for a necessary being like God to explain the universe's genesis and existence by emphasizing its contingent nature.

Anselm. "The Existence of God" Rp. 345-347 (this is the "Ontological Argument" for God's existence)

- 1) Explain in your own words what Anselm means by a being "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."

Anselm's "Ontological Argument" for God's existence is based on logic rather than observation of nature, unlike Aquinas' Cosmological Argument. Anselm defines "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" as the holiest, perfect, and unsurpassed existence. It is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect. Anselm calls this highest being God. Anselm argues that existence makes a being great. Anselm believed that a genuine creature was better than a mental abstraction. Thus, the presence of the greatest possible creature implies that it exists in actuality. Anselm's Ontological Argument rests on the idea that the greatest possible

being is both perfect and necessary. The greatest potential being must exist in reality to be great. Thus, Anselm claims that God, the most exalted and perfect person, must exist.

- 2) On 346, what is Anselm's argument about why this greatest possible being must exist in reality, by its very nature?

Anselm expands his Ontological Argument by showing why the greatest possible creature must exist based on its nature. He considers two possible states for the greatest imaginable being: simply in mind and both in mind and reality. Anselm claims that if the greatest conceivable being exists solely in the thought, a greater being exists both in the mind and actuality. This contradicts the premise that the most powerful being is "that than which nothing greater can be conceived." Anselm believes the best entity must have all possible good traits, including existence. A mind-only being is inferior to a mind-and-reality being. Thus, the biggest possible entity must exist to preserve the premise. It would not be the greatest being otherwise. Anselm argues that the greatest possible creature must exist in reality because its nonexistence would contradict its supreme and flawless nature. Anselm concludes that God, the most perfect and supreme being, must exist since existence is an intrinsic quality of the greatest possible being. This argument proves that God exists based on the critical traits of the best possible entity.

Hume. "The Argument from Design". pp. 365-370 (this is Hume's criticism of the "Teleological Argument" for God's existence...)

- 1) Describe the Teleological Argument as presented on pages 365-366.

David Hume criticizes the Teleological Argument for God's existence in "The Argument from Design." Order, complexity, and purpose in nature form the Teleological Argument. This argument claims that the universe's complex design and harmony cannot be random or necessary. Instead, they contend that order and complexity indicate an intelligent designer, which they call God. The Teleological Argument compares nature to human-made objects

like watches and machines. It proposes that the universe's meticulous order and harmony, like a watch's complicated and deliberate design, reveals a divine creator. This argument assumes that design in nature demands an explanation, and the most likely answer is an intelligent designer who created and maintained the cosmos' order and harmony.

Hume criticizes the Teleological Argument using Philo's dialogues to make several significant arguments. First, Hume claims that the parallel between nature and human-made products is weak and unsatisfactory. He claims the universe is unlike any human invention, making comparisons unsuitable. Second, Hume argues that the existence of design in nature does not always indicate a single, flawless, and benevolent creator. Instead, it could be the work of numerous designers, a defective designer, or a designer with limited ability and experience. Finally, Hume criticizes that natural processes or chance cannot explain the universe's order and complexity. He thinks that natural design could explain matter's fundamental qualities or nature's self-organizing principles.

- 2) On 367, Hume, through Philo, states that for all we know, "matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as the mind does". What do you think he means by this statement and the paragraph it's found in?

Hume, through Philo, disputes the Teleological Argument's claim that an intelligent designer is required for the universe's order and complexity. "Matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as the mind does," Hume suggests that matter's inherent qualities may cause the observable order and complexity. Hume claims that the Teleological Argument wrongly assumes that only an intelligent mind can generate order and complexity. Hume argues that matter can organize itself into sophisticated and ordered forms without an intelligent being. He suggests that matter's fundamental qualities and natural laws could create the universe's order and complexity. Hume attempts to show that the Teleological Argument is not the only explanation for order and complexity in the

cosmos. Hume rejects the Teleological Argument's central premise that an intelligent creator must explain observed design by claiming that matter itself contains the source of order. This alternative explanation urges a more critical assessment of the Teleological Argument's assumptions and a greater investigation into the universe's nature and sources of order and complexity.

- 3) What are some of the problems Hume presents concerning the comparison of the universe to a machine and the assumption that it must also be designed?

Hume questions the Teleological Argument's analogy of the universe to a machine and its implication that it was designed. Problems include:

- a) Hume claims that comparing the universe to a machine or human-made artifact is unconvincing. He believes that human creations cannot be compared to the universe. No human-made product compares to the universe's scale, complexity, and variety. Thus, using human artifacts to infer conclusions about the universe may be flawed.
- b) According to Hume, natural disasters, sickness, and suffering show the universe's design flaws. The Teleological Argument claims a perfect and compassionate creator constructed the universe, making these defects hard to reconcile. Hume suggests that universe defects could reflect a defective designer, several designers, or a designer with limited power and understanding.
- c) Hume proposes several explanations for the universe's order and complexity. He thinks that matter may have order and that natural processes or rules may explain the universe's complexity. Hume also suggests that the universe's order and complexity may result from limitless trial and error with diverse substance combinations.
- d) Hume notes that humans have little experience creating worlds and universes. Our limited experience with human-made things informs our design and creation

knowledge. Thus, it may be foolish to presume the cosmos follows the same rules and has a designer.