

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W-03

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Finishing Philosophy of Religion (Aquinas, Martin, Hume)

Starting Epistemology

Writing Tutor Visit

I. Recapitulation

- On Tuesday, we discussed the difference between a priori and a posteriori reasoning.
- The ontological argument is an a priori argument, since it depends on analyzing a term.
- The argument from design is an a posteriori argument.
- I am calling the cosmological argument a posteriori.

Is the cosmological argument a priori?

- In Part IX of Hume's *Dialogues*, Demea calls the cosmological argument a priori.
- Some elements of the cosmological argument could be called a priori.
- E.g., the claim that every effect has a cause may be seen as a definition of the concept of a cause.
- So, it would be known a priori, as we know that bachelors are unmarried.
- But, even the argument from first cause has to start with the claim that the world exists.
- Our belief in the existence of the world is clearly empirical.
- So, the cosmological argument is not as purely a priori as the ontological argument.

II. Aquinas's Cosmological Argument

The five ways

- 1. There must be an unchanged changer.
- 2. There must be a first cause.
- 3. Something must exist necessarily.
- 4. There must be something which has all perfections.
- 5. The arrow must be guided by the archer.
- These five ways are more or less independent arguments.
- The differences are subtle.
- We will, following Martin, focus on the general point, most clearly expressed in the second way, that there must be a first cause.

Aquinas's Cosmological Argument, as rendered by Martin:

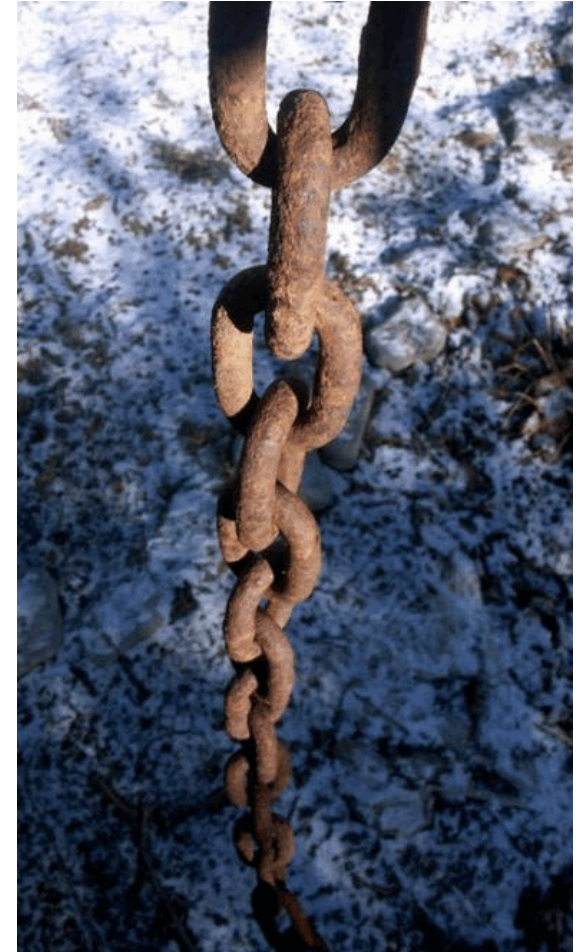
1. Everything we know has a cause.
 2. There can not be an infinite regress of causes.
- So, there must be a first cause; call it God.

Martin points to two flaws in Aquinas

Martin's first criticism

Premise two is unsupported.

- Martin calls this premise non-empirical.
- He means that we are making an unsupported assumption.
- For Aquinas, and all thinkers prior to Cantor in the mid-nineteenth century, the notion of an infinite series was uncomfortable.
- Even the application of infinities in the calculus of Newton and Leibniz did not alleviate worries about infinity.
- We now work quite effectively in mathematics, with infinite series.
- We find the sum of an infinite sequence, for example.
- Why can't there be an infinite chain of causes?



Martin's second criticism

The first cause may not have the attributes we normally attribute to God.

- Martin repeats this complaint about the third way, too.
- See the inference from steps 14 to 15, p 38.
- But, if we establish the existence of an unchanged changer, or of a necessary being, we have established quite a bit.
- So, Martin's second criticism is weaker than his first.

III. Hume, and the argument from design

Cleanthes argues a posteriori.

Demea argues a priori, in Part IX.

Philo is a skeptic, although he aligns himself initially with Demea.

- Hume considers a variety of arguments, concerning:
 - ▶ The existence of God
 - ▶ The attributes of God
 - ▶ General philosophical topics
 - ▶ The problem of evil and the compatibility of a benevolent God with human suffering, especially in Parts IX and XI

Hume on the problem of evil

Four causes of human suffering:

1. Our ability to feel pain.
2. The presence of general, inviolable physical laws.
 - ▶ (E.g., if a lightning bolt, or a train, is headed toward you, it will continue in its path.)
3. Our limited natural abilities.
 - ▶ “An indulgent parent would have bestowed a large stock in order to guard against accidents... (69).
4. Unpredictability of nature, or “inaccurate workmanship of all the springs and principles of the great machine of nature (70)”.

The Manichean universe

- Two designers, one good and one evil, battle for control of the world
- But, the uniformity of natural law, the second cause of human suffering, seems to undermine the Manichean view.
- We are going to focus on the argument from design, which is a denial of Hume's fourth cause of human suffering, above.

The argument from design

- Often credited to William Paley, though the argument is much older.
- Proponents argue that the world looks so well made that we are forced to posit a designer.
- Paley was a younger contemporary of Hume, and influenced the young Darwin.

Paley's argument

...when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive... that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e.g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, or placed after any other manner or in any other order than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it...the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker, that there must have existed, at some time and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer, who comprehended its construction and designed its use.

<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/paley.html/>

Hume's version of design

Cleanthes, p 46

Consider, anatomize the eye, survey its structure and contrivance, , and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of sensation. The most obvious conclusion, surely, is in favor of design... Who can behold the male and female of each species, the correspondence of their parts and instincts, their passions and whole course of life before and after generation, but must be sensible that the propagation of the species is intended by nature?

Note the use of the word 'intended'.

The argument from design is an argument from analogy.

1. From like effects we infer like causes. (See Hume, p 42.)
 2. The workings of nature are like the workings of artifacts, like watches.
 3. Artifacts like watches demand thoughtful design.
- So, nature must have a designer.

Hume's central objection to the argument from design

The similarities mentioned in premise 2 are insufficient.

- We only have experience of a small corner of the universe, p 43.
- Our explorations of the universe, both in the large and small, make it seem quite unlike any human artifact, Part V.

Well-designed artifacts may not require an intelligent designer

- In Part V, Philo mentions the ship built by a “stupid mechanic”.
- The stupid mechanic argument is similar to the argument from order, in Part VII.
- Demea argues that we only see order in the presence of thought.
 - Philo responds that we see it all the time in nature: trees, birds, etc.
 - It begs the question to assume that there has to be a designer of the trees and birds.
- Because the similarities are weak, the design argument invites other, similar arguments.

Another argument from design

1. From like effects we infer like causes.
 2. Every time we have seen thought, it has been connected with a human body.
 3. The designer has the capacity for thought.
- So, the designer must be human. (See p 52.)

Still another one

1. From like effects we infer like causes.
 2. The workings of nature are like the workings of the human body; see p 53.
 3. The human body is connected to a soul.
- So, the universe is the body connected to the designer's soul.
That is, the universe is a giant animal; see p 56.

Since the universe seems more analogous to an animal (or even a vegetable), it is likely to have originated from generation (or vegetation)

The world is like an animal, a comet is the egg of the animal, and, like an ostrich, hatches the egg and produces a new animal (55).

The point of the alternative cosmogonies

- Philo does not really intend to promote these deviant cosmological/cosmogonical theories.
- His point, and Hume's point, is that a posteriori arguments about the existence of God are destined to fail.
- They go beyond human experience, beyond our capacity to know.
- We are merely speculating, and our choices are arbitrary, p 57.
- Proponents of the argument from design emphasize only the similarities that support the conclusion they want.

Other interesting cosmologies

- The giant turtle
- We may be living in a computer simulation.
- We live in a hollow/inverted earth.
- Put aside such odd speculation, after noting that such theories are often more difficult than one imagines to disprove.

A last problem with the argument from design

- It does not explain the origin of intelligence.
- Philo expresses this complaint in Part IV.
- Designers could be creatures from other planets, rather than God.
- We would need an explanation of the origins of these creatures, and their superior intellects.

Distinguish the argument from design from intelligent design.

- Intelligent design is promoted as an alternative explanation of human origins.
- The argument from design is compatible with evolution.
- The proponent of the argument from design might marvel at the wonders of evolution and say that they themselves are evidence of a designer.
- Darwin himself may have held such an opinion.

IV. Other topics to notice in Hume's *Dialogues*

- the problem of induction: esp 42, 56, 69
 - ▶ “The effects of these principles [of nature] are all known to us from experience; but the principles themselves and their manner of operation are totally unknown... (56)”.
- the relation between mind and body: p 52
 - ▶ “No man [has] ever seen reason but in a human figure; therefore, the gods must have a human figure (52)”.
- matters of fact and relations of ideas, p 61
- happiness and misery, good and evil, in Part X.

V. Epistemology

The theory of knowledge

- What do you know?