

Philosophy 110W - 3: Introduction to Philosophy, Hamilton College, Fall 2007  
Russell Marcus, Instructor  
email: [rmarcus1@hamilton.edu](mailto:rmarcus1@hamilton.edu)  
website: [http://thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Intro\\_F07/Course\\_Home.htm](http://thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Intro_F07/Course_Home.htm)  
Office phone: 859-4056

Lecture Notes, September 4

### Recapitulation

Last week, we looked at Anselm's ontological argument, and criticism from Gaunilo. We also peeked at Descartes's version of the argument, and Caterus's criticism. And, we talked a bit about Kant's solution, that existence is not a predicate, or property. While Kant's argument may not work, there are other arguments for his conclusion. We will now look at the argument from formal logic, and at Moore's argument.

Also, I noticed and fixed some small errors on the first reading guide, all in Part VIII and Part IX of the Hume reading.

### I. The formal logic argument for Kant's solution

Many philosophers are swayed in Kant's direction by their familiarity with first-order logic's distinction between predication and quantification.

To understand this argument, we need to understand a bit of first-order logic.

In propositional logic, we have simple terms for statements, and some connectives:

Negation ( $\sim$ ): "It is not the case that..."

Conjunction ( $\cdot$ ): "and"

Disjunction ( $\vee$ ): "or"

Material Implication ( $\supset$ ): "If... then..."

We can build complex statements out of simple statements using these connectives.

Let 'P' stand for: Gonzales resigned on Monday.

Let 'Q' stand for: Vick pleaded guilty.

Then ' $P \cdot Q$ ' means that Gonzales resigned on Monday and Vick pleaded guilty.

' $(P \vee Q) \supset P$ ' means that if either Gonzales resigned on Monday or Vick pleaded guilty, then Gonzales resigned.

In first-order logic, we have complex terms for statements, made of objects and predicates, as well as quantifiers which indicate existence.

We represent objects using lower case letters.

We represent predicates using capital letters.

These stand for properties of the objects, and are placed in front of the object letters.

Pa: means object a has property P, and is said "P of a"

Pe: Emily is a philosopher

He: Emily is happy

Translate each sentence into predicate logic.

1. Alice is clever.
2. Bobby works hard.
3. Chuck plays tennis regularly.

Consider: All philosophers are happy.

The subject of this sentence is not a specific philosopher, no specific object.

Similarly for "Something is made in the USA"

There is no a specific thing to which the sentence refers.

For sentences like these, we use universal and existential quantifiers.

The existential quantifier,  $\exists x$ , is used with any of the following expressions:

There exists an  $x$ , such that

For some  $x$

There is an  $x$

For at least one  $x$

Something

The universal quantifier,  $\forall x$ , is used with:

For all  $x$

Everything

Something is made in the USA:  $(\exists x)Ux$

Everything is made in the USA:  $(\forall x)Ux$

Nothing is made in the USA:  $(\forall x)\sim Ux$       or       $\sim(\exists x)Ux$

All persons are mortal:  $(x)(Px \supset Mx)$

Some actors are vain:  $(\exists x)(Ax \cdot Vx)$

Some gods aren't mortal:  $(\exists x)(Gx \cdot \sim Mx)$

No frogs are people:  $(x)(Fx \supset \sim Px)$       or       $\sim(\exists x)(Fx \cdot Px)$

So, Kant's solution presages a later distinction in formal logic.

Properties like being a god, or a person, or being mortal or vain, get translated as predicates.

Existence is taken care of by quantifiers, rather than predicates.

To say that God exists, we say ' $(\exists x)Gx$ ' or ' $(\exists x) x=g$ '

Note that the concept of God, and the object, are represented independently of the claim of existence.

Since first-order logic is supposed to be our most austere, canonical language, there does seem to be a real difference between existence and predication.

Still, we should not necessarily follow Kant on the basis of first-order logic.

Formal systems can be constructed with all sorts of properties.

We can turn any predicate into a quantifier, or a functor, even turn all of them into functors.

The question, which is beyond the scope of this course, is whether first-order logic really is the best framework for metaphysics.

II. Moore argues to the same conclusion as Kant, but provides a different argument.

First, note that there's a bit of terminological confusion between Kant and Moore.

Kant calls real predicates 'determining'.

But he calls grammatical predicates 'logical'.

Moore contrasts logical predicates (Kant's real predicates) with grammatical predicates.

The Moore/Kneale terminology derives from the fact that we do not use a predicate to represent existence in first-order logic.

Thus, existence is not a first-order-logical predicate.

Moore wants to distinguish between real predicates and grammatical ones on the basis of use. He notes that 'tame tigers exist' lacks the ambiguity between some and all that 'tame tigers growl' has. In fact, 'all tame tigers exist' is just odd, perhaps unusable.

'All tame tigers growl', he says, means that some tame tigers growl and no tame tigers do not growl. By analogy, 'all tame tigers exist' should mean that some tame tigers exist, and no tame tigers do not exist.

That last clause seems meaningless.

So 'all tame tigers exist' should be nonsense as well.

Similarly, 'some tigers do not exist' is odd.

Existence thus seems logically tied to 'some' and 'all', which are represented by quantifiers in first-order logic, in a way which ordinary predicates, like 'growl' and 'are striped' are not.

Thus, we have a difference in the way we use sentences which supports the formal distinction.

Kant's criticism is usually taken to be decisive against the ontological argument, but I am not so sure. Even if existence is a thin property, there do seem to be some things which exist and some things, like James Brown, and a golden mountain, that do not exist.

### III. Rowe's argument

Kant's denial of the ontological argument is tied up with general points about existence and predication. Other problems with the ontological argument are more specifically directed at the argument itself.

Rowe argues that the ontological argument is in fact question begging, since it presumes what it sets out to prove, if we accept that God possibly exists.

If God possibly exists, then either God exists or God does not exist.

Rowe concedes to Anselm that no non-existent thing can be God.

For, if we define God to be all perfections, and concede that existence is a perfection, then the concept of God would be contradictory.

But, we can concede that no non-existent thing is God, while leaving open the question whether any existent thing is God.

Perhaps, as Rowe says, the concept of God is impossible to instantiate.

That is, 'God' would refer to nothing coherent, or consistent.

Rowe's solution, as he himself notes, yields the conclusion that either God exists or God is impossible.

For, any possible thing must either be an existent thing or a non-existent thing.

And, since God can not be a non-existent thing, (s)he must be either impossible or existent.

Thus, by granting the possibility of God, we are already granting God's existence.

Rowe uses the concept of a magican to illustrate.

There can be no non-existent magicans, since he defines a magican as an existing magician.

If something does not exist, then it can not be a magican.

So, if there are no existing magicans, then there are no magicans.

But, if a magician exists, then there is a magican.

Note that Rowe's approach to criticizing the argument differs from that of Kant.

Kant denied that existence was a property.

Rowe uses existence as a property, but shows that it is an awkward property.

#### IV. A priori and a posteriori arguments

The ontological argument is an example of an a priori argument for God's existence.

It arises out of thought, rather than experience.

A statement is believed a priori if our justification of that belief is independent of experience.

It is hard to specify exactly what 'independent of experience' means.

A statement is believed a posteriori, or empirically, if our justification refers to sense experience.

Are these statements believed a priori or a posteriori?

1. It is Tuesday.
2. Tuesday is a day of the week.
3. If it is raining, then it is raining.
4. What goes up, must come down.
5. The sky is blue.
6.  $2+2=4$ .
7. We are studying at Hamilton College.
8. Hamilton College is a College.
9. Bachelors are unmarried.
10. It is time to leave.

1, 4, 5, 7, and 10 are empirical claims.

2, 3, 6, 8, and 9 may be believed a priori.

#### V. Hume's principle

Kant, following Hume, urged that a priori arguments which purport to conclude that something exists are inappropriate.

Hume's principle which is relevant here is that matters of fact can not hold a priori.

We can see it in the *Dialogues*, p 61.

Logic, which precedes a priori, or independent of content, should make no existence assertions.

In many cases, Hume's principle is true.

We generally construct logic to tell us about the relations among statements, not to tell us about the nature of the world.

It is the job of science to tell us about the nature of the world.

The distinction between logic and science is the distinction between validity and truth that I mentioned in our first meeting.

But Anselm might respond that the ontological argument is an exception to Hume's principle.

Who is to say that a general principle can not admit of exceptions?

Other arguments for God's existence start with premises about the existence of the world, and its properties.

These arguments are called a posteriori.

In particular, the argument from design and the cosmological arguments are a posteriori, or at least have empirical elements.

Aquinas's arguments are cosmological, and Hume discusses the argument from design in depth.