

Philosophy 240
Symbolic Logic

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Class #13: Logic and the Philosophy of Religion

Logic and the Philosophy of Religion

- Three topics in the philosophy of religion
 1. The ontological argument for God's existence
 2. The problem of evil
 3. Leibniz's theodicy
- How can logic help us with such topics?
 1. Regimentation
 2. Consistency and contradiction

Anselm's Ontological Argument

We believe you are something greater than which cannot be thought. Or is there no such kind of thing, for “the fool said in his heart, ‘there is no God’” (Ps. 13:1, 52:1)? But certainly that same fool, having heard what I just said, “something greater than which cannot be thought,” understands what he heard, and what he understands is in his thought, even if he does not think it exists. For it is one thing for something to exist in a person’s thought and quite another for the person to think that thing exists. For when a painter thinks ahead to what he will paint, he has that picture in his thought, but he does not yet think it exists, because he has not done it yet. Once he has painted it he has it in his thought and thinks it exists because he has done it. Thus even the fool is compelled to grant that something greater than which cannot be thought exists in thought, because he understands what he hears, and whatever is understood exists in thought. And certainly that greater than which cannot be understood cannot exist only in thought, for if it exists only in thought it could also be thought of as existing in reality as well, which is greater. If, therefore, that than which greater cannot be thought exists in thought alone, then that than which greater cannot be thought turns out to be that than which something greater actually can be thought, but that is obviously impossible. Therefore something than which greater cannot be thought undoubtedly exists both in thought and in reality (Anselm, *Proslogion*, Chapter 2)

Regimenting Anselm's Argument

- Here's a regimentation:
 - AO1. I can think of 'God'.
 - AO2. If 'God' were just an Idea, then I could conceive of something greater than 'God' (i.e. an existing God).
 - AO3. But 'God' refers to that than which nothing greater can be conceived.
 - AO4. So 'God' can not refer just to an idea; it must refer to an actual object.
 - AOC. So, God exists.
- Remember, if the form is valid, then if the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.
- Alternatively: if the form is valid, then if the conclusion is false, at least one of the premises must be false

On Regimentation

- Advantages
 - Perspicuity
 - Simplicity
 - Separate validity from soundness
 - Focus
- Disadvantages
 - Errors of interpretation
 - Information loss

A Corollary (Anselm)

- “In fact, it so undoubtedly exists that it cannot be thought of as not existing. For one can think there exists something that cannot be thought of as not existing, and that would be greater than something which can be thought of as not existing. For if that greater than which cannot be thought can be thought of as not existing, then that greater than which cannot be thought is not that greater than which cannot be thought, which does not make sense. Thus that than which nothing can be thought so undoubtedly exists that it cannot even be thought of as not existing” (Chapter 3).
- Regiment that!

Gaunilo's Response to Anselm's Argument

- They say there is in the ocean somewhere an island which, due to the difficulty (or rather the impossibility) of finding what does not actually exist, is called "the lost island." And they say that this island has all manner of riches and delights, even more of them than the Isles of the Blest, and having no owner or inhabitant it is superior in the abundance of its riches to all other lands which are inhabited by men. If someone should tell me that such is the case, I will find it easy to understand what he says, since there is nothing difficult about it. But suppose he then adds, as if he were stating a logical consequence, "Well then, you can no longer doubt that this island more excellent than all other lands really exists somewhere, since you do not doubt that it is in your mind; and since it is more excellent to exist not only in the mind but in reality as well, this island must necessarily exist, because if it didn't, any other island really existing would be more excellent than it, and thus that island now thought of by you as more excellent will not be such." If, I say, someone tries to convince me through this argument that the island really exists and there should be no more doubt about it, I will either think he is joking or I will have a hard time deciding who is the bigger fool, me if I believe him or him if he thinks he has proved its existence without having first convinced me that this excellence is something undoubtedly existing in reality and not just something false or uncertain existing in my mind.

A Regimentation of Gaunilo's Argument

- GO1. I can think of 'the most perfect island'.
- GO2. If 'the most perfect island' were just an idea, then I could conceive of something greater than 'the most perfect island' (i.e. an existing most perfect island).
- GO3. But 'The most perfect island' refers to that island than which no greater island can be conceived.
- GO4. So 'the most perfect island' can not refer just to an idea; it must refer to an actual object.
- GOC. So, the most perfect island exists.

Anselm and Gaunilo Compared

AO1. I can think of 'God'.

AO2. If 'God' were just an idea, then I could conceive of something greater than 'God' (i.e. an existing God).

AO3. But 'God' refers to that than which nothing greater can be conceived.

AO4. So 'God' can not refer just to an idea; it must refer to an actual object.

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Leibniz, the Ontological Argument, and Compossibility

- “Since we often think of impossible chimeras - for example of the highest degree of speed, of the greatest number, of the intersection of the conchoid with its base of rule - this reasoning is insufficient... There are true and false ideas, depending upon whether the thing in question is possible or not. And it is only when we are certain of its possibility that we can boast of having an idea of the thing” (D23, AW 239a).
- Leibniz is worried about the compossibility of the perfections.
 - Compossibility: consistency
- Put aside the ontological argument for now; let’s look at consistency and philosophy of religion.



Evil, Error, Free Will

- G1 The existence of evil seems inconsistent with the perfections.
 - especially with perfect goodness
- G2 The existence of error seems inconsistent with the perfections.
 - especially with omnipotence
- G3 The existence of free will seems inconsistent with the perfections.
 - especially omniscience

Evil and Error

Responses

- The greater good argument
- The limits-of-human-understanding argument
- The nihilism argument

Thrasymachus, in Plato's *Republic*

The just is always a loser in comparison with the unjust. First of all, in private contracts: wherever the unjust is the partner of the just you will find that, when the partnership is dissolved, the unjust man has always more and the just less. Secondly, in their dealings with the State: when there is an income tax, the just man will pay more and the unjust less on the same amount of income; and when there is anything to be received the one gains nothing and the other much. Observe also what happens when they take an office; there is the just man neglecting his affairs and perhaps suffering other losses, and getting nothing out of the public, because he is just; moreover he is hated by his friends and acquaintances for refusing to serve them in unlawful ways.

But all this is reversed in the case of the unjust man. I am speaking, as before, of injustice on a large scale in which the advantage of the unjust is more apparent; and my meaning will be most clearly seen if we turn to that highest form of injustice in which the criminal is the happiest of men, and the sufferers or those who refuse to do injustice are the most miserable, that is to say tyranny, which by fraud and force takes away the property of others, not little by little but wholesale; comprehending in one, things sacred as well as profane, private and public; for which acts of wrong, if he were detected perpetrating any one of them singly, he would be punished and incur great disgrace - they who do such wrong in particular cases are called robbers of temples, and man-stealers and burglars and swindlers and thieves. But when a man besides taking away the money of the citizens has made slaves of them, then, instead of these names of reproach, he is termed happy and blessed, not only by the citizens but by all who hear of his having achieved the consummation of injustice. For mankind censure injustice, fearing that they may be the victims of it and not because they shrink from committing it. And thus, as I have shown, Socrates, injustice, when on a sufficient scale, has more strength and freedom and mastery than justice; and, as I said at first, justice is the interest of the stronger, whereas injustice is a man's own profit and interest.

The Free Will Argument

A kind of greater-good argument:
It is better to have free will and evil than
to have no evil (and thus no free will).

- Libertarianism: I am free to choose.
- Determinism: My acts are pre-determined.
 - They must be if there is an omniscient God
 - Also: laws of physics (but maybe not relevant here)
- Incompatibilism
 - Libertarianism and Determinism are inconsistent
 - A Meta-Position!
- Paradox: two propositions, each independently plausible, which can not be true together

Compatibilism

- There is no paradox, no inconsistency between free will and determinism.
- Leibniz: “The one whose contrary implies a contradiction is absolutely necessary; this deduction occurs in the eternal truths, for example, the truths of geometry. The other is necessary only *ex hypothesi* and, so to speak, accidentally, but it is contingent in itself, since its contrary does not imply a contradiction. And this connection is based not purely on ideas and God's simple understanding, but on his free decrees and on the sequence of the universe” (D13, AW 231a).
- Hume presents a different kind of compatibilism.

Leibniz's Theodicy

1. God is omnipotent and omniscient and benevolent and the free creator of the world.
2. Things could have been otherwise—i.e., there are other possible worlds.
3. If this world is not the best of all possible worlds, then at least one of the following must be the case:
 - 3a. God was not powerful enough to bring about a better world; or
 - 3b. God did not know how this world would develop after his creation of it; or
 - 3c. God did not wish this world to be the best; or
 - 3d. God did not create the world.
4. 3a-3d all contradict 1.

Therefore, this world is the best of all possible worlds.

Options:

- Accept the argument
- Reject its form
- Reject (at least) one of the premises