

Arguments About the Existence of God

HZT4U1 – Mr. A. Wittmann - Unit 6 - Lecture 2



Personal god



Impersonal god

What About God?

- Scientific discoveries and theories have challenged traditional religious belief.
- For some people, proof of God's existence is not needed, but for others, proof strengthens religious belief.
- Even theologians are asking whether we can still believe in a traditional God, questioning traditional assumptions and perceptions of ourselves and the world.

The 3 Arguments

1. Ontological Argument
2. Cosmological Argument
3. Design Argument

Ontological Argument



- Anselm (1033–1109)
- 1st to assert the argument in a formal, self-conscious manner using reason alone...
 1. If we cannot conceive of nothing greater than god.
 2. But if god was just an idea, we could conceive of something greater.
 3. But we cannot, so God exists in reality.

Ontological Argument (continued)

- Kant claimed that Anselm wrongly assumed existence is a property that can be part of the concept of a thing.
- But existence is not a property or part of the concept of a thing.
- But Anselm thought nonexistence was an imperfection and therefore inconsistent with the nature of a perfect being.
- He argued that a perfect being must exist.

Cosmological Argument



- Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)
- Systematic, logical, mathematic study
- Adapted ideas from Aristotle
- Result from a study of the cosmos
- Summa Theologica and Summa Contra Gentiles
- 5 proofs

Cosmological Argument

(continued)

- His 1st & 2nd cosmological proof claim that something had to start causality and time.
- Some critics say that Aquinas' views on motion were disproved by Newton.
- Others say it is possible for the series of cause and effect in the universe to be infinite.
- His defenders reply that the discovery of the "Big Bang" shows the series of motions and causes in the universe had a beginning and is not infinite.

Cosmological Argument

(continued)

- Aquinas also held that even if the universe existed forever, the existence of the entire everlasting chain of motions and causes still needs to be explained, and God is the only explanation.
- Hume responded that if each individual effect is explained by a previous cause, the entire infinite chain needs no more explanation.
- Critics say if “everything has a cause,” then God should have a cause.

Cosmological Argument

(continued)

- But Aquinas says that everything in our universe has a cause and that this requires an uncaused being who, unlike anything else in the universe, has no cause.
- Some of his defenders say Aquinas may be interpreted as believing that an endless series of explanations in which one thing is explained by some other thing ends up being no explanation at all.

Thomas Aquinas Video

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Design Argument



- William Paley's (1743-1802) argument from design...
1. If we find an artifact, like a watch, that is designed to achieve a purpose, we can conclude it was made by an intelligent being.
 2. But things we find in nature, especially living things and their parts, are designed to achieve a purpose.
 3. So, by analogy, we can conclude they were made by an intelligent being, and this is God.

Design Argument (continued)

- Hume objected that although we know how artifacts like watches are made, we have no knowledge of how nature and living things are made, so for all we know nature and living things are produced by a non-intelligent mechanism.
- Darwin argued that the non-intelligent mechanism of evolution through natural selection, working over millions of years, can produce living things whose parts appear to be designed by an intelligent being to achieve some purpose, but are not.

Design Argument (continued)

- Defenders of the argument from design argue that even if evolution is a fact, the believer can still hold that evolution is the means by which God produces living things and their parts.
- Dembski (1960-present), a proponent of intelligent design, argues that the “specified complexity” (the directedness and improbability) of genetic evolution implies an intelligence design is the cause, not random chance.

Design Argument (continued)

- Others argue that if the features of the universe which make human life possible, were slightly different, human life could not exist.
- It is so improbable that a universe would have developed these features from an infinite range of other possible features.
- These had to be deliberately selected, by an intelligent god, to make human life possible (anthropic principle).
- Critics of this new argument say some physical process, not God, selected the features that make life possible.

THE END