

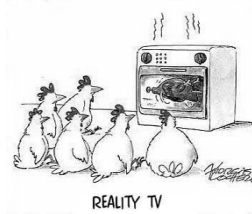
PHIL 110A
Week 5: Reality and God
 Paul Thagard

Metaphysics

What exists?

Existence of God

Please turn off and put
 away all electronics.



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Metaphysics

Metaphysics: What is reality? What is real?

Ontology: What exists?

Idealism: everything is mental.

Materialism: everything is matter/energy.

Dualism: people are both minds and
 bodies.

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What do you think exists?

1. What are you sure exists?
2. What are you sure does not exist?
3. What are you uncertain about whether it exists?

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How to decide what exists?

Force. Authority. Faith. Wishful thinking.

Reliable coherentism:

1. Collect evidence using fairly reliable procedures such as perception, memory, testimony.
2. Use arguments to assemble hypotheses and evidence.
3. Use coherence to pick the hypotheses most coherent with the evidence.

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Discussion Question

Why do you believe that some kinds of thing exist and other kinds of things do not exist?

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Aquinas (1225-1274)

Five arguments for the existence of God:

- Motion
- Cause
- Necessity
- Gradation
- Design



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Argument from Motion

1. Objects are in motion.
2. Motion of objects results from other objects.
3. Causes precede effects.
4. Cause-effect chains are finite.
5. Therefore, there is a first mover, God.

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Argument from Causes

1. There are events.
2. Every event has a cause different from itself.
3. Causes precede effects.
4. Cause-effect chains are finite.
5. Therefore, there is a first cause, God.

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Problems

1. Some motions may be uncaused (inertia).
2. Some events may be uncaused (random).
3. Cause-effect chains may be infinite: oscillating universe.
4. Birthday fallacy: even if every event has a cause, there doesn't have to be something that caused everything.
5. Why identify the first cause with a single god who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-benevolent?

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Argument from Design

Aquinas's fifth argument: some things are designed, so there must be a first designer.

Paley's abductive argument:

1. Organisms have organs that are intricate and well designed for their purposes.
2. Analogy: A watch is intricate and well designed, and the best explanation is that the watch had a designer.
3. The designer hypothesis is a better explanation of nature than the hypothesis that it's all random.
4. Therefore, there is a designer, God.

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Problems

1. Alternative explanation of design: evolution (Darwin 1859). Random variation (mutation, sexual combination) plus natural selection.
2. Analogy is weak: organs differ from watches in many respects: metabolism, gradations, imperfections.
3. Problem of evil: nature has many bad designs, such as diseases, earthquakes.

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Discussion Question

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument from design?

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Super Argument

The existence of God explains:

1. The existence of the universe.
2. The design of organisms.
3. Miracles occur.
4. The prevalence of religious belief.
5. Religious experience.
6. The existence of morality.

No scientific hypothesis can explain all these.

Therefore, the best (most coherent) explanation is that God exists.

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Response to Super Argument

1. Physics explains the existence of the universe.
2. Biology explains the design of organisms.
3. Miracles are illusions.
4. Sociology and psychology explain the prevalence of religious belief.
5. Psychology explains religious experience.
6. Psychology and philosophy explain the existence of morality.

Therefore, the hypothesis that God exists is not part of the best explanation of all the evidence.

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