

Phil. 23 Exam #3:

- 1. Cosmological Argument:** The cosmological argument for God's existence goes like this: The world could not exist on its own so there must have been a first cause that brought it into being. This first cause is God. Or put another way, the universe could not just exist on its own—someone or something must have made it. This cause of the universe is God. The cosmological argument derives its title from observing the world around us (the cosmos). It begins with what is most obvious in reality: things exist. It is then argued that the cause of those things' existence had to be a "supreme" being. Cosmological arguments raise the question about the very nature of the cosmos itself. It seems as if events and objects depend for their existence on other events and objects; in other words, everything (events, the planet, the galaxy) exist for a reason. The cosmological argument asks: in a cosmos such as ours that appears to be contingent, what might provide a sufficient reason that it exists rather than not.

Objections: Bertrand Russell denies that the universe needs an explanation; it just is. Russell contends that since we derive the concept of cause from our observation of particular things, we cannot ask about the cause of something like the universe that we cannot experience. The universe is "just there, and that's all" But, the theist responds, if the components of the universe are contingent, isn't the universe itself contingent? Russell replies that the move from the contingency of the components of the universe to the contingency of the universe commits the Fallacy of Composition, which mistakenly concludes that since the parts have a certain property, the whole likewise has that property. Hence, whereas we can ask for the cause of particular things, we cannot ask for the cause of the universe or the set of all contingent beings.

. Let us suppose that the universe had a first event. According to the cosmological argument, this first event had to have some cause, which means, *some event which caused the first event*. Now can we even make any sense of that? The proposal is: there was a first event; but this first event had to be caused by *another event*. But don't causes have to precede their effects..? But then what we are calling the "first event" is not actually the first event, because there is another.. event, which preceded it and caused it to occur, and that is a contradiction.

. Let's consider the premise of the argument; the premise is that whatever has a beginning to its existence *must* have a cause. What reason is there to believe this causal principle is true? It's not self-evident; something is self-evident if and only if everyone who understands it automatically believes it. But many people, including leading theists such as Richard Swinburne, understand this principle very well but think it's false. Many philosophers think this principle is false. This principle is not self-evident, nor can this principle be deduced from any self-evident proposition. Therefore there's no reason to think it's true. It is either false or it has the status of a statement we do not know if it's true or false. At the very least, it is clear that we do not know that it is true.

Teleological Argument: The teleological argument is also known as "the argument from design" (The Greek word "telos" means "purpose" or "design. "). The argument goes like this: The universe evidences great complexity or design; thus, it must have been designed by a great "Designer" or God. The argument from design can be likened to a watch. A watch is obviously made by a watchmaker/designer. The world, which is much more complex than a watch, must also have been designed by a great "Designer" or "Divine Watchmaker" (God). In sum, the teleological argument asserts that the universe evidences too much complexity to be the product of random chance. We know that the celestial bodies move with perfect accuracy in their orbits. Our bodies, too, are incredibly complex. According to the teleological argument, there's just no way all this complexity could "just happen." God must have created it all and sustains it.

Objection: Complexity is a subjective thing. Looking at a rock, it doesn't look very complex. If you pile a bunch of rocks on top of each other randomly, it doesn't build a house, so you may say that it doesn't look very complex either. If you examine it though, you can see that a pile of rocks is a perfect home for insects. To insects it is perfectly complex. If you have a single hydrogen atom in space, it is not very complex, but if you pile on enough hydrogen, it can start a star which is infinitely more complex than hydrogen. If you look at a meteoroid, it is not complex, but if you pile enough of them together, you get a planet, and that is much more complex than a meteoroid. These things are all done by natural forces, and they are all extremely complex depending on your point of view. In the case of man, we can imagine ways in which life can start, and all the elements necessary for that are freely available not only on earth, but in space. All it takes is fortunate chance, and suddenly we have all that is necessary for life to evolve. This watchmaker idea no longer seems so pertinent.

5/5

2. **The problem of evil (or argument from evil)** is the problem of reconciling the existence of the evil in the world with the existence of an omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful) and perfectly good God. Is such suffering compatible with an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God? If these implications of God do exist then he knows how to, wants to, and is able to prevent all suffering. If such a God existed, though, then he actually would *prevent* all suffering. Suffering, though, is a familiar part of the world around us; it has not been prevented. There is, therefore, no omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent God according to the problem of evil argument for the rejection of Gods existence.

Responses: Arguably it is good for there to be a cosmos where there are free creatures dependent upon each other for their welfare and they are able to act in some independence of the power of God. Philosophers such as Peter van Inwagen reasoning appears valid in assessing that preventing *all* undeserved suffering would not only rule out evolution; it would require God to continuously, miraculously interfere in the natural world. The theist has a plausible line of argument to the effect that the concept of a best possible world is problematic.

.A response to the problem of evil is the free-will defense. Much of the evil in the world occurs only because we choose to create it. The greatest evils in the world are those inflicted by man upon man. In making the world, God faced a choice: he could create free agents like us, or he could create automata, robots, without the ability to make choices of their own. God chose to create free agents, and he made the right choice; a world containing free agents is clearly more valuable than a world of robots. The pay-off for this is the abuse of freedom that we see around us. Free agents sometimes choose to abuse their freedom, to do wrong. The wrong that we do, though, the suffering that we cause, great though it may be, is a price worth paying for something that is profoundly valuable: genuine freedom. Though God could have prevented evil by creating a world of automata, it is a good thing that he did not.

.The free-will defense is, I believe, a partial success. I believe that it is correct to say that it is better that the world contain agents with significant freedom than that it contains only automata, and I believe that much of the evil that we see around us is a consequence of the abuse of this freedom. Not all evil, however, can be explained in this way. There is much evil that is not inflicted by man. Natural disasters, for example, cause great destruction, but there is

nothing that we have done that causes them and there is often nothing that we could have done to prevent them.

.Another response to the problem of evil is that the existence of evil is a necessary condition for the existence of certain kinds of good. There are a number of character traits that are valuable only if evil exists. Compassion, for instance, is of great value, but can only exist if there is suffering. Bravery, too, is a virtue, but only if we sometimes face danger. Self-sacrifice is another great good, but can only exist if there is inter-dependence, if some people find themselves in situations where they need help from others. God created us in such a way that we would depend upon one another, that we would be drawn together to form a community. If each of us were self-sufficient, safe from suffering, then the great goods that come from this would not have been possible.

5/5: nice work on both