



DEFENDING THEISM

Arguments for God's Existence



SESSION 4

OPENING PRAYER

CONTINGENCY AND THE PSR

THE ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

TWO COMMON OBJECTIONS

THE ARGUMENT FROM CHANGE

PRAYER BEFORE STUDY

Ineffable Creator, Who, from the treasures of Your wisdom, have established three hierarchies of angels, have arrayed them in marvelous order above the fiery heavens, and have marshaled the regions of the universe with such artful skill,

**You are proclaimed the true font of light and wisdom,
and the primal origin raised high beyond all things.**

**Pour forth a ray of Your brightness into the darkened places of my mind;
disperse from my soul the twofold darkness into which I was born:
sin and ignorance.**

**You make eloquent the tongues of infants;
refine my speech and pour forth upon my lips the goodness of Your blessing.**

**Grant to me keenness of mind, capacity to remember, skill in learning,
subtlety to interpret, and eloquence in speech.**

**May You guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress,
and bring it to completion.**

You Who are true God and true Man, who live and reign, world without end. Amen.

CONTINGENCY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON (PSR)

Defending Theism

DO YOU REMEMBER PRELIMINARY POINT #7 (FROM SESSION 1)

**Atheism is not the “default”
position. Push back on this.**

WHY IS ATHEISM NOT THE DEFAULT?

De facto - The vast majority of humans who have ever lived have had some kind of theistic belief.

BUT THE ATHEIST MIGHT RESPOND...

1. ...with the "one less god than you" objection

or

2. ...by pointing out the "god of the gaps" phenomenon

WHY IS ATHEISM NOT THE DEFAULT?

But behind both of these problems (i.e. positing many gods or using God as an explanation for the current gaps in scientific knowledge) is a fundamental human intuition...

WHY IS ATHEISM NOT THE DEFAULT?

**The *contingency* of the
observable world must rest on
something *necessary*.**

WHAT IS A CONTINGENT BEING?

A contingent being is a being that exists, but does not *have to exist*.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON (PSR)

Everything that exists has an
explanation of its existence

HOW DO WE DEFEND THE PSR?

BY
OBSERVATION...

- We are never content with something left “unexplained.”
- We find explanations when we look for them, or assume that there is a good one even if we haven’t yet discovered it.

BY “REDUCTIO
AD ABSURDUM”

- Denial of the PSR leads to radical skepticism about perceptual experiences.
- Denial of the PSR leads to radical skepticism about our rational faculties, thereby making any such denial ultimately incoherent.

THE ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

Defending Theism

THE ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

Premise 1: Contingent beings exist.

Premise 2: Any contingent being A must have an explanation for its existence outside of itself (PSR).

Premise 3: The explanation itself must be either a necessary being or a contingent being.

Premise 4: No finite or infinite series of contingent things ultimately adequately explains why contingent being A exists.

THE ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

Premise 5: So, there must exist a non-contingent being (i.e. a necessary being) to account for the series of contingent beings.

Premise 6: A necessary being is one that neither came into existence, nor can cease to exist, but eternally maintains its own existence; its very nature is the explanation for its existence.

Conclusion: There must exist a being who exists by a necessity of its own nature, and is the fundamental explanation for contingent being.

TWO COMMON OBJECTIONS

Defending Theism

OBJECTION #1

Why think that the necessary being is God?

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY GOD? (FROM SESSION 1)

EXODUS 3:13-14

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO AM."

ACTS 17: 24-25; 27-28

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything...Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'

ST. THOMAS
AQUINAS

Ipsium Esse Subsistens → Subsistent Existence Itself

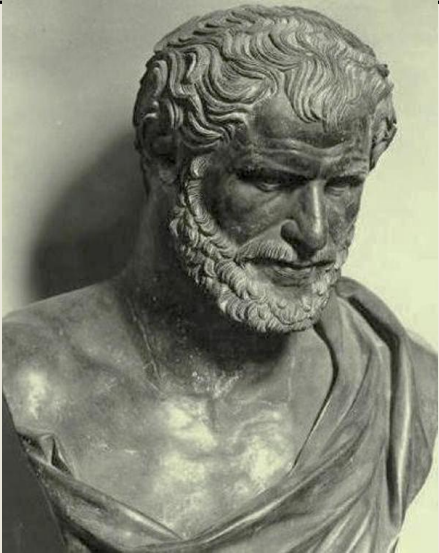
OBJECTION #2

**Why can't the universe itself
be the necessary being?**

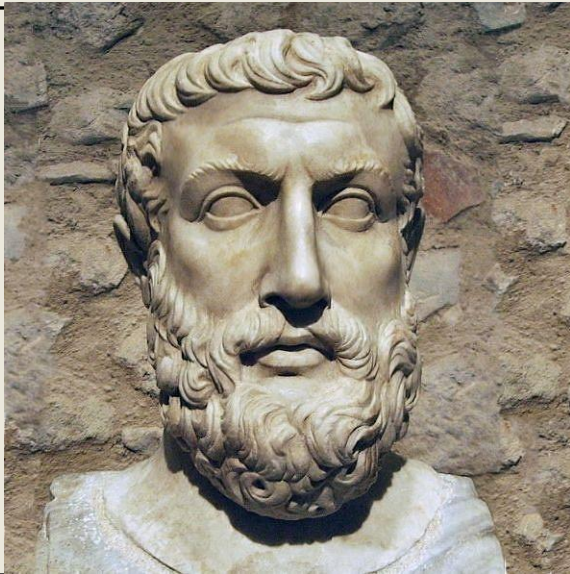
ARGUMENT FROM CHANGE

Defending Theism

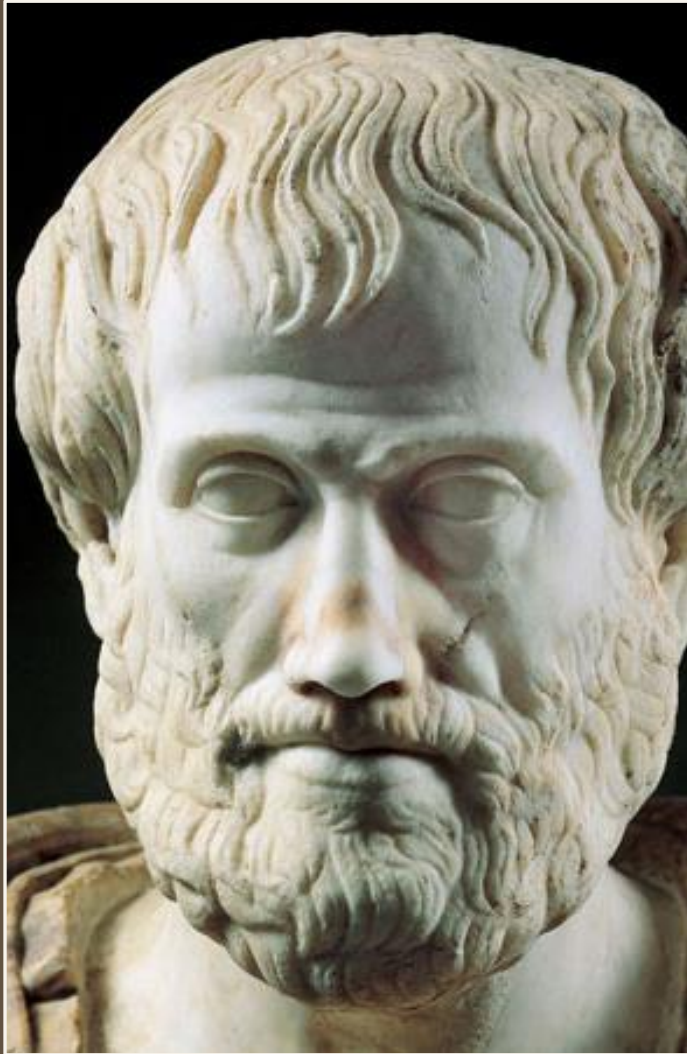
HOW DO WE EXPLAIN CHANGE?



Heraclitus: All things are flux/change. Stability is an illusion.



Parmenides: Change is impossible. All things that exist are "being." Differences between beings are an illusion.



ARISTOTLE'S CONTRIBUTION

Non-being is not the only candidate for a source of change.

We must distinguish between actuality and potentiality within "being" (example of blue rubber ball)

Noting the potentialities of a being implies an underlying nature.

IMPORTANT ARISTOTELIAN PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY

No potential can actualize itself. It must be actualized by something outside of it.

Stated differently: Whatever is being changed is being changed by something else.
Something else that is already actual in that respect must do the actualizing.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

(SOURCE: JOHN DEROSA OF CLASSICALTHEISM.COM)

Linearly Ordered Series

Each member possess causal power in its own right. Do not, in principle, require a first member.

(Example: Father begetting a son.)

Hierarchical Ordered Series

Each member possesses causal power only instrumentally or derivatively, except for the first member that imparts power to the rest of the series. In principle, this type of series must have a first member. Not first in the sense of time, but first in the sense of possessing underived causal power.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

No potential can actualize itself. It must be actualized by something outside of it.

THE ARGUMENT FROM CHANGE

Premise 1: Things in this world change

Premise 2: Every change involves the actualization of some potential. (e.g. my hand is potentially two feet to the right... 'move it'...now it is actually two feet to the right)

Premise 3: Nothing can actualize its own potential, but is brought to actualization by some other changing thing.

Premise 4: But that change also requires an explanation here and now.

Premise 5: You cannot have an infinite regress in a hierarchically-ordered sequence.

Conclusion: There must be some "unchanging changer" as the root cause of all change. This "unchanging changer" or "uncaused cause" is what we mean by God.

