

The casual and ontological argument of gods existence philosophy essay



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Descartes' argument for God's existence sprang from the argument he used from proving his own. He started constructing his argument from the only two statements he found out he is sure of, that he exist, and he is thinking. As just a refresher, I will devote a paragraph for a brief explanation how it happened that he was left with just these two facts.

Descartes' started off by deciding to clear his head of all opinions, even the most basic of them, that he accepted without even passing his reason, either those of which he accepted because of social pressure or those of which he just accepted because of consistency. Thus, he found that the senses are not reliable; he has no reason to think it so. Thus, everything that are perceived by the senses are also doubtful. Voila, now he believes that nothing exist, as all things are perceived by the senses. But then again, he thought of it, right? And whether he is right or wrong on what he is thinking, it doesn't matter, as long as it proves the fact that he is thinking, thus he proved that one thing he cannot doubt is that he is thinking. Now, you can't say that " he is thinking" without the " he is", or to put it on more scholarly terms, The fact that he proved that he is thinking, regardless what his thoughts are, also proved that he exist, for an action cannot be done without someone doing it. One would now ask, can you prove the " he is" on any kind of action? How about running? Here, I would praise Descartes for finding out the only action that does not require any senses at all, that it's process are all performed by the cogito, not like something like running, that of which required the sense of sight, that you are running, and the sense of feel, that your feet are actually moving.

The Causal Argument

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Now as to God's existence, Descartes now though, having the facts that " he exist" and " he is thinking" turns to the cause of these facts, the cause of his existence. Descartes then introduced the " Causal Adequacy Principle" which will gauge what is necessary for a something to be the adequate cause of the effect, which then would open to us that Descartes' belief that something cannot come from nothing. An example of this principle in action can be seen on how a pot is heated to a boil, that the stove must have necessary amount of heat, at least 100 degrees or more, to boil the pot. That the cause or the stove, if it doesn't have the adequate premises that would require it to boil a pot, then would not be able to boil the pot.

With this, Descartes now uses this principle to find the cause of his existence. That in accordance with the Causal Adequacy Principle, an idea can only be caused by something that has at least as much formal reality as the idea has objective reality. Now, we have two terms here that needs to be clear. First would be formal reality. The formal reality of any thing is just its actual existence and the degree of its perfection; the formal reality of an idea is thus its actual existence and degree of perfection as a mode of mind. The objective reality of an idea, on the other hand, is the degree of perfection it has, considered now with respect to its content. Descartes argument here is that just by having the idea of the perfect being in his head, therefore, there must be a formal reality of god as well. Her first thought of him, he being a finite substance, can be the cause of any idea with the objective reality of a finite substance, but not an infinite one. But as he has the concept of God in his thought, that concept has infinite objective reality, thus cannot be thought by him alone nor can be caused by any other

by restriction of the “ Causal Adequacy principle”, for a finite substance would not have enough reality to be the cause of the idea of an infinite substance. The only possible explanation and reason for this is that there is actually, or it is a fact that exist something that has infinite formal reality. Basically, To put it simpler, a finite being has no capability of thinking of something infinite, unless if there is, it is sure that he is not the cause of such though for a finite substance cannot be a cause of an infinite one. So the idea must've come from a real infinite substance, and he is who we call God.

On the first part of his argument about creating the “ Causal Adequacy Principle”, I found it very agreeable, although not quite original for many philosophers also used this kind of principle; Thomas Aquinas for example used some type of variation of the “ Causal Adequacy Principle”. It's just basic logic to say that it won't be the cause of the effect if the cause doesn't have enough power to cause it., quite confusing but you get the point.

But when the principle was used for proof of the existence of God, I'd say it was put in wrong context and was misused. Descartes complicated things by introducing his terms like “ Formal Reality” and “ Objective Reality”, I would argue that in his argument on God's existence, I think the arguement can handle even if it didn't have those terms. But of course I respect it for it is his working definition, as I have my own.

Onto the main argument, the argument is as simple as saying that the fact that we think about an infinite being is proof enough that he exist, of course some points of his is about the “ objective Reality”, that is the though of God

as an infinite being, must be partnered by the "formal reality" as to the real existence of God as also an infinite being. I would argue that it does not follow, and it doesn't violate the "Causal Adequacy Principle". For it does not follow that the causal principle be used here, that it does not follow that whatever is contained objectively in an idea must be contained formally in the cause of that idea. For it does not follow that the Formal reality of the idea is the cause of its objective reality, an example is a unicorn for example, but then he Descartes would argue that that idea exist because it can be allowed that two or more idea can be inputted in a single idea to form an original objective reality. But wouldn't have Descartes thought that maybe the lacking or our being finite is actually the main reason of our thought of the infinite and the perfect, that because of our differences, because of our capabilities and restrictions and because of our mortality, we are influenced to think about something that is perfect, infinite, and has no restrictions. That it is actually because of the imperfect that we know the idea of perfect, makes sense right? If Descartes was such a mathematician, why didn't he think about lines being infinite for example, =====>, I just drew infinity, would one deem that as god? But is there really an infinite line in the real world? No, so Descartes would say that God put the idea of the infinite in us? Or maybe the concept of the finite line, of the 1, 2, 3 made us think, it is actually possible to not stop counting, though we can never accomplish counting in infinity, we can say that we are enveloped in the process of actually counting it.

The Ontological Argument

Now, the ontological argument of the existence of God is actually quite comparable to Saint Anselm's, one might say almost the same, Anselm's just a bit more radical. Descartes argument here is that God's mere Characteristic proves his existence, saying that for god to be perfect, he must exist, for actual existence is a perfection for existing is better than not to exist, so God would lack perfection or would not be perfect if he does not exist, therefore, the idea of a " God" that doesn't exist is not actually GOD at all, but something with imperfection. Hence, the idea of a supremely perfect being or God without existence is incomprehensible. This means that existence is contained in the essence of an infinite substance, and therefore God must exist by his very nature.

This is a really irritating argument for me, it really seems impenetrable this argument, that I wish I could find even a flaw, but I really can't. Everything seems to be in good order. Maybe the only thing one would question is the characteristic of God, how'd you know that that's the characteristic of God, but as we all agreed upon, a perfect being is one who we call god. If you could, please comment on this ontological argument.

In conclusion, although I find Descartes' Argument about God's existence very interesting, it isn't that original at all. The first argument was just a glorified version of the principle of cause and effect, and although the ontological version was good, it is just the stereotypical ontological argument about god, or maybe just because I learned about his arguments first with other philosophers that I found his very dull.