

INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

LECTURE THREE

DIVINE SIMPLICITY - Important because it is a canon of rationality that *ceteris paribus* we prefer simpler theories to more complicated ones. (You may want to look up the Problem of the Under-determination of Theory by Data.)

THE ACCIDENTAL PROPERTIES OF GOD

Accidental because of God's essential property of perfect freedom – God could have chosen not to create anything in which case He wouldn't have had the properties of creator; of creating moral obligation; of revealing Himself to anyone; or of offering anyone everlasting life.

PROPERTY TEN: CREATORDOM - God is that without which the physical world (and anything else there might be in addition to Him, e.g. souls and angels) could not exist.

PROPERTY ELEVEN: A SOURCE OF MORAL OBLIGATION - God is a source of moral obligations for us.

The Euthyphro Dilemma: Is something good because God wills it or does He will it because it's good?

Possible Answers:

1. Things are good just because God wills them.
2. God wills things because He recognises them as good.
3. Some things are good just because God wills them and some things He wills just because He recognises them as good.

Possible Problems:

- 1 seems to imply God could have made torturing puppies good and seems to make 'God is good' an empty claim.
- 2 seems to imply God has no authority.
- 3 seems (to me, anyway) to avoid the disadvantages of 2 and 3.

PROPERTY TWELVE: REVEALER - God has revealed certain truths about Himself to us.

Why aren't these truths more obvious? This is the Problem of Divine Hiddenness. Claim: the 'Hide-and-Seek' God preserves for us the good of freedom to do less than we ought, which previous lecture has established (to me, anyway) is a power for us.

PROPERTY THIRTEEN: OFFERER OF EVERLASTING LIFE

Theists are agreed that there will be a 'Last Judgement', after which some will go on to an everlasting life that will not be disembodied or in any way impoverished; others however – it is traditionally suggested - will go on from it to an 'everlasting death' in Hell.

Does surviving death make sense?

Yes, on any plausible theory of personal identity.

Would it be good were we to get to Heaven?

Yes, maximally so.

My claim: Theism entails Universalism (the view that everyone ultimately gets to Heaven), even though most Theists aren't Universalists. That we enjoy the good of Heaven will - if needs be - trump respecting our freedom.

When the 'Hide-and-Seek' God eventually definitively says 'Here I am', none of us are going to say, 'I'd prefer to go to Hell than be with you, thanks.'

CAUTIONARY NOTE

The Problem of Divine Hiddenness – why doesn't God reveal Himself to everyone *ante-mortem*? - is much discussed; it's worth looking up in a few readers in the subject. (As well as the argument that there's not enough revelation, there's the argument that there's 'too much' – why does God tolerate so many religions? These are both, arguably versions of the Problem of Evil.)

SUGGESTED READING

Plato, *Euthyphro*

T. J. Mawson, 'God's Creation of Morality', *Religious Studies* 38, 1-25 (2002)

T. Talbot, *The Inescapable Love of God* (Universal Publishers [Good choice of publisher, eh?], 1999)

OTHER POINTS OF VIEW – ALL AVAILABLE AT THE CLICK OF A MOUSE!

In these first three lectures, I've argued that the theistic concept of God is coherent (it's logically possible that there be a God); in doing so, even though I've ended up where they've ended up, I've parted company with various theists along the way to that destination. I've mentioned some of this in my cautionary notes on each handout, but I here mention/re-mention the views of the main theistic groups that I'll have alienated. First, Open Theists; they have a number of their own websites. Here's one: <http://www.opentheism.info>. If you want to see me give an extended argument for why you shouldn't be an Open Theist, have a look at my paper, 'Divine Eternity', available here <http://ora.ouls.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid%3A2f72d7d3-9730-415a-a3ec-2247cadac67a>. Second, Molinists; have a look at this site: <http://www.theopedia.com/Molinism>. Third, on the issue of the Euthyphro dilemma, I've backed a minority view. In my review article for *Philosophy Compass*, I give a more balanced account of the options. You should be able to find it at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2009.00244.x/full>. And then finally, there's my Universalism (everyone gets to Heaven). William Lane Craig defends the claim that Theism is compatible with denying Universalism as well as anyone I've ever heard defending it in a debate with Ray Bradley that is freely available on the web as an MP3. I'm going to link to it through a site that gives some (mainly critical!) commentary: <http://commonsenseatheism.com/?p=2523>. So, that's the main groups of theists who'd disagree with me.

I'll have alienated some theists then, but theists will have been happy with the general thrust of these lectures – that the claim that there's a God is coherent, even – I have suggested – essentially simple and important. The claim that the theistic concept of God is coherent is something which some – indeed I'd hazard most - atheists agree with too: certainly many atheists are happy to agree that it's logically possible that there's a God; they just think that it's not reasonable for us to believe this logical possibility obtains; it's not metaphysically possible (in my terms). (After all, it's logically possible that there are fairies at the bottom of the garden, but we all think it's not reasonable to believe that this logical possibility obtains; these atheists think that God's a bit like fairies.) But some atheists disagree with theists (and these atheists who think that God's a bit like fairies) and think that it's *logically impossible* that there be a God (God's like a round square or a married bachelor). It's worth being alert to their main lines of argument too. Fortunately (from our point of view), atheists are not without websites. The following one groups together links to papers which push various lines of argument against the logical possibility of there being a God: <http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/nontheism/atheism/logical.html>.

And one wouldn't want to dismiss the hobby of collecting miniature teapots without having first had one's prejudices challenged by visiting. <http://cimba7200.blogspot.com/2011/04/jills-miniature-teapot-collection-over.html>.

T. J. Mawson