

SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS Part II

Science and Theology – complementary or mutual exclusion?

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Abstract

The major factor that limits application of science in theology is identified as negligence of the mind aspect of humans. The argument is developed through two paths: Arguments Against Existence of God and Arguments for Existence of God.

Durkheim's Social Argument, Freud's "psychological crutch" argument and The Argument from Evil constitute the arguments against God existence.

Arguments for God existence consists of St. Anselm and Descartes' Ontological Argument (Priori Logical argument); Aquinas' three versions and Descartes' two versions of The Cosmological Argument (Posteriori Logical argument); Aquinas and Paley's Teleological Argument (Logical

Argument); and The Argument from Will and Faith: Kant's Moral Law Argument, Hobbe's argument against revelations, and Hume's disbelief in miracles.

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the second of a series of four papers, which contend that science is incapable of resolving arguments in metaphysics. Science has generally ignored the mind aspect and concentrated on the material aspect of things, including humans. This limits application of science to metaphysics. The limitation of science applications in theology is examined in this paper.

Metaphysics has a mundane or earthly origin. It is not beyond or above

natural laws (physics). People associate metaphysics with events that are not normal or natural, supernatural things like magic, clairvoyance (super-hearing), clairaudience (visit by spirits), and “New Age” thinking. These phenomena cannot be explained by using usual physics laws. Thus people think metaphysics has a transcendental origin, higher than nature. The word “meta” means above or beyond, it implies something higher, and is therefore a misleading word.

Actually metaphysics came from Aristotle¹ (384-322 BCE), a very famous Greek philosopher, often regarded as the father of Western philosophy. He lectured on every subject and left behind notes that were disorganized when he died. Andronicus of Rhodes organized the notes and grouped them into – Ethics, Zoology, Botany, Logic, Physics, etc. But he found a collection that was difficult to categorize. These included topics on God – does He exist? Is He substance? How are we related? We, Universe, Being – some beings are eternal and exist forever, hence permanent and some beings are contingent, and exist temporarily, thus impermanent. He labeled the collection “beyond the physics”, which in Greek was “*Meta Ta Physika*”. Metaphysics is grouped into four main branches

- Theology – study of God
- Psychology – study of person or mind
- Cosmology – study of the universe

Ontology – study of being.

Science has not paid attention to the mind or mental aspect of a living entity. Apart from cosmology, metaphysics involves the mind. Psychology is study of the mind. Beings have mind and the study of beings, ontology, includes mind. Theology, the study of God also involves the mind. Thus science is most probably excluded from theology or study of God.

2. SOME COMMON VIEWS ENCOUNTERED IN THEOLOGY

2.1 Arguments against Existence of God

(a) The **Social Argument** of Durkheim² says God is a **symbol of society**. But symbols are not real and therefore God does not exist. “Society” meaning is vague, not clear and certainly not fixed. For example Thailand is ethnically and religiously different in places. So how can one define Thai society? Thus his first premise was faulty. Even if society were defined, **concept of God** may be different for individuals or groups.

Concept is a mental property. Thus **concept of God** is mental and consequently beyond science. **Symbol** is mind created, and since science has neglected the mind, it cannot contribute to this argument. Also, the same symbol may mean different things to different

people. A very good example is a story where a sexually perverted man was consulting a psychiatrist. The latter drew circles and asked the man what these reminded him of. The man got up and walked away indignantly muttering “Silly guy! He’s the one who’s sexually disoriented!”.

(b) Freud’s argument³ says God concept is a “*psychological crutch*” for dealing with randomness or disorder in nature. His basis “*There is no God because there is no proof*” commits *Ad Ignorantiam Fallacy* (appeal to ignorance). Thus there is no evidence for truth of the premise. Also belief in God may be for reasons other than randomness. Another thought is can a “crutch” be God’s choice? “*psychological crutch*” constitutes a mind connected thing. Science is again incapable of contributing here.

(c) Argument from Evil consists of four categories: atheists (no God), skeptics (maybe no God), agnostics (one or other), and naturalists (supernatural events have natural explanations). There is so much immoral and natural evil in the world that good (God, omnibenevolent, omnipotent) cannot exist.

2.2 Arguments for Existence of God

(a) Logical argument, priori – The Ontological Argument – the very being of God proves God.

St. Anselm⁴ says God is **conceived** as the greatest being, and since God is **conceivable** He exists, at least in the **imagination**. This means that a higher being must exist in reality. Someone higher than God exists thus the God in the imagination is not God. This is an absurd conclusion. Thus God exists in reality. “**Conceivable**” “**Imagination**”- these are words describing mental activity, and thus preclude science.

Descartes⁵ says he can **think** of a perfect being – God. If God exists only in the imagination, He is not perfect – absurd. Thus God exists. Existence is a predicate or property of a “perfect being” (God). But a property of a predicate is that it adds to a concept. God existence does not add to God concept. Thus God existence is not a predicate (property or characteristic) of God concept. Hence Descartes argument fails. But on the other hand certain things, like **love**, great, omnipresent, actually add to the God concept. **Thinking** and the above emotional state **love**, are mental, and science is not valid here.

(b) Logical argument, posteriori – The Cosmological Argument – first cause.

The basis of the three versions of Aquinas⁶ is that every movement has a mover. (i) The movement/mover chain is not infinite, it does not go on forever, there must be a first mover –God. (ii) Every effect must have a prior cause occurring before it. Cause/effect chain

does not go on forever - so there must be a first cause – God. (iii) If every being is contingent and does not exist forever, there must be no being at one time, and there can be no being now. But there are beings now, so there must be a necessary being – God. But the possibility of the cause/effect relationship being circular (the father being the cause of the son; and the son being the cause of the father - the father cannot be a father unless the son exists) rather than linear (the father is the cause and the son is the effect) is ignored. Kant⁷ showed this cosmological argument is faulty. The mover can cause movement only after thinking about moving. This is the “**response series**” of mind activity, described in the first paper of the series: Science and Metaphysics Part I, Scientific Art Appreciation – Is It Possible? Thus every movement has mind as the initiator. Science has excluded the mind and has therefore limited its usefulness here.

Descartes’ first version⁵ says that the cause is at least as great as its effect. Beings are not perfect, but they have an **idea of perfection**. Hence there must be a perfect cause – God. His second version says existence is experienced from one moment to another. This continued existence demands a great enough cause – God. Kant⁷ showed this cosmological argument to be faulty. “**idea of perfection**” is mental and science is excluded.

(c) Logical Argument – The Teleological Argument – acts toward an end.

Aquinas⁶ says unintelligent things in nature act toward an end result. They cannot direct themselves there, so there must be an intelligent director – God.

Paley⁸ using the watch/watchmaker analogy argued that the presence of the universe means a universe-maker, an intelligent being – God, must exist.

The generic version may be like, the intricate or complex design in the universe means a designer must be present. The grand designer is God.

Hume⁹ advanced three criticisms to the teleological argument. (i) A design pattern formed does not necessarily mean a design is present (horse head shaped cloud). If there is no design there is no designer – no God. (ii) Watch/watchmaker is a weak analogy. (iii) Even if the universe has a design, the designer may not be God. He was able to challenge the argument, but was unable to disprove it.

The key factor in Kant’s criticisms⁷ of the three arguments for existence of God is that the ontological argument fails because of the **idea** that God existence automatically follows the God **concept**. The cosmological argument is based on the ontological, and the teleological is based on the cosmological – the primary basis is the

ontological argument. It fails and hence all three arguments fail. **Idea** and **concept** are mental and science is helpless here. Also a designer has to map out or conceive the design mentally before it can be implemented.

(d) Argument from Will and Faith.

In the Moral Law Argument, Kant⁸ attacked attempts to prove God's existence by using logic. In all arguments from **will** and **faith**, many who believe in God cannot prove God exists logically, but they consider it better to believe than disbelieve His existence. Kant did not try to prove God's existence, but tried to justify his belief in God.

Many believe in God because they **believe** they had witnessed a revelation or miracle. Hobbe¹⁰ argued against revelations. He contends, "God spoke in a dream is just the same as dreaming God spoke". But he cannot prove that God cannot speak in a dream.

Hume⁷ attacked belief in miracles saying that events happen according to natural laws. Miracles are defined as things that cannot be explained by natural laws, so they cannot happen. Thus belief in God, based on miracles is faulty. He suggests that miracles are a way of explaining the unexplainable. But it can be argued that nature in itself may be a miracle. However people who believe in God due to revelations and miracles, do not claim to prove God's

existence. They just think these add to the probability of God's existence.

Pascal¹¹ does not believe that **human reasoning** is powerful enough to prove existence of God. He bet it is better to believe that God exists. There is no chance of loss, whereas disbelief can lead to total loss, like eternal damnation, with total misery in hell forever. **Human reasoning, will, faith, and belief**, all involve mental activity and thus precludes science, which has ignored the mind.

3. CONCLUSION

Human reasoning, will, faith, belief, idea, concept, idea of perfection, conceivable imagination, *psychological crutch* are some of the words and phrases encountered in the above views. These are mental activities or mental properties. Hence science is precluded in all the arguments. In fact God is a concept, an idea. Hence science is quite incapable of contributing to theology. Science and Theology is mutually exclusive.

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