

Logic Warm-up + The Paradox of the Stone

1 Logic review and warm-up

- **Logic** is the study of *arguments*.
- An **argument** is a set of *claims* consisting of one or more *premises* and a *conclusion*.
- The **premises** of an argument are claims that are intended to support the *conclusion*.
- The **conclusion** of an argument is what the argument is ultimately trying to *show is true*.
- **Good** deductive arguments have at least two features:
 - Good arguments have premises that are true.
 - Good arguments are **valid**.
 - An argument is **valid** *if and only if* impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false.

EXERCISE 1: For each of the following arguments, discern whether they are good or bad and why.

A.

- (1) Bars are too loud.
- (2) Beer has too many calories.
- (3) So, it's wrong to drink alcohol.

B.

- (1) If Michael Jordan is only four feet tall, then LeBron James is a better basketball player.
- (2) Michael Jordan is only four feet tall.
- (3) So, LeBron James is a better basketball player than Michael Jordan.

C.

- (1) God exists.
- (2) Therefore, God exists.

D.

- (1) Either Jimmy is a student at SLU or Jimmy is a student at UMSL.
- (2) If Jimmy is a student at SLU, then he lives in St. Louis.
- (3) If Jimmy is a student at UMSL, then he lives in St. Louis.
- (4) So, Jimmy lives in St. Louis.

2 Three Attitudes about Claims

There are *many* different attitudes you can have about any claim. You can, for instance, dislike a claim. You can hope a claim is true. You can worry about the truth of a claim.

But there are **three** fundamentally important attitudes people take towards claims.

- You can **believe** that a claim.
 - If you believe a claim C, you think C is true.
- You can **disbelieve** a claim.
 - If you disbelieve a claim C, you think C is false.
- You can **suspend judgment** about
 - If you suspend judgement about a claim C, then you neither believe nor disbelieve C.

Some particular claims are so important that there are terms for the people who take different attitudes toward them. The claim that *God exists* is one of these claims.

- A **theist** is someone who *believes* that God exists.
 - So **theism** is the view that God exists.
- An **atheist** is someone who *disbelieves* that God exists.
 - So **atheism** is the view that God does not exist.
- An **agnostic** is someone who suspends judgement about the existence of God.
 - So **agnosticism** is the attitude someone takes if they neither believe nor disbelieve in the existence of God.

EXERCISE 2: Discuss the following question: Given the definition of agnosticism, is it possible for someone to argue for the truth of agnosticism?

3 Theism and the Capital-G God

EXERCISE 3: If theism is the view that God exists, do the Greek pagans count as theists?

Theism turns out to be ambiguous. Sometimes, people use it to mean the view that God exists, and sometimes use it to mean the view that gods (lowercase!) exist.

We are going to use theism to mean the view that God (uppercase G) exists.

But what does this mean? It means that a *perfect being exists*, because God = a perfect being.

This view has scriptural support and is in the Confession of Faith that our church affirms:

PSALM 97:9: For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods (ESV).

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION: “There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection...” (II-I).

EXERCISE 4: Discuss: What can we conclude about God’s power from the fact that God is perfect? What can we conclude about God’s knowledge from the fact that God is perfect? What can we learn about God’s goodness from the fact that God is perfect?

4 A Problem for God's Power

THE PARADOX OF THE STONE: This problem for God's power is called *the paradox of the stone*. It goes like this: God is omnipotent. That means that God can do *anything*. There is nothing outside of God's power. But...can God make a stone so heavy that he can't lift it? It appears that there are only two possible answers to this question: "yes," and "no." Let's look at the implications of both answers. If the answer to the question is "yes," then it appears as if there is something God couldn't do: he couldn't lift the stone. If this were right, then God couldn't be omnipotent because there would be a limit to his power: he couldn't lift the stone. What if the answer to the question is "no?" If the answer is "no," then God can't create a stone so heavy that he can't lift it. So, there would be something God couldn't do. So, God wouldn't be omnipotent.

EXERCISE 5: Look at argument **D** in **EXERCISE 1**. Is the *paradox of the stone* similar in structure to this argument **D**? The *paradox of the stone* is an *argument*. So, looking at argument **D**, try to parse out each of the premises and the conclusion of *the paradox of the stone*. What are the premises? What is the conclusion? Is the argument valid?