1 Last time

We talked about two different models for answering the question of why there's something rather than nothing (Q1), and why there's this particular something, life and all (Q2):

- **Inference to the best explanation**: Hypothesis H is the best explanation of observations O iff
  - o H's truth makes O more likely, and
  - o H is independently more likely than competing hypotheses.
- To give a **causal explanation** of observations O is to give O's causal history.

"Of those who accept the Brute Fact View, many assume that it must be true. According to these people, though reality merely happens to be some way, *that* it merely happens to be some way does not merely happen to be true. There could not be an explanation of why reality is the way it is, since there could not be a causal explanation, and no other explanation would make sense.

This assumption, I have argued, is mistaken. Reality might be the way it is because this way is the fullest, or the most varied, or obeys the simplest or most elegant laws, or has some other special feature. Since the Brute Fact View is not the only explanatory possibility, we should not assume that it must be true." (Parfit, 590)

Selectors are supposed to features of possibilities that explain why they obtain. For example, if maximality is a Selector for the existence of the universe, then being maximal is sufficient for the universe's existence. To evaluate the hypothesis that the universe exists because it's maximal, we have to verify both that the universe's maximality makes our observations more likely (Is our universe consistent with the All Worlds Hypothesis?) and that it's likely that the universe exists *because* it's maximal.

Swinburne, on the other hand, argues that we can give a causal explanation for why the universe exists. He appeals to explanatory simplicity in arguing that a causal explanation is better than a non-causal explanation that appeals to a hierarchy of Selectors.

2 Teleological arguments (or arguments from design)

Features of teleological arguments:
- Take as *a posteriori* evidence that the universe is a certain way
- Conclude that an intelligent being exists that made the universe that way
We've already looked at fine-tuning arguments.

"We take the FIFTH WAY from the governance of things. For we see that certain things that lack knowledge – namely, natural material substances – act for the sake of an end. And this is evident because they always or more frequently act in the same way in order to achieve what is best, and hence it is evident that they reach their goal by striving, not by chance. But things that lack knowledge, do not strive for goals unless a being with knowledge and intelligence directs them, as, for example, an archer aims an arrow. Therefore, there is a being with intelligence who orders all the things of nature to their ends, and we call this being God." (Aquinas, 3)

Aquinas' argument:
1. We have evidence that natural (non man-made) things are goal-directed. For example, plants grow towards the sun.
2. Natural things aren't goal-directed unless they're arranged that way by an intelligent being.
3. Therefore there must be some intelligent being that arranges natural things so that they're goal-directed.
4. Therefore God exists.

Replies?
- Hume rejects that 3 gets us a single omnipotent, omniscient God.
  - Many gods? Many *stupid* gods? An all-evil god? An arranger but not a creator? …
- Darwin's theory of natural selection provides an alternative explanation for goal-directedness.

"In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a *stone* and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer that for anything I knew to the contrary it had lain there forever; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a *watch* upon the ground, and that it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had given before, that for anything I knew the watch might have always been there … when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive – what we could not discover in the stone – that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose …" (Paley, 1)

Paley's argument:
1. If we encountered an object of complex design like a watch on the beach, the best explanation for its existence would be the existence of a designer.
2. Likewise, the best explanation of non man-made objects, which are also complex, is the existence of a designer.
3. Therefore God exists.