Twitter Thread by Catholic Answers

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The Contingency Argument for God's existence, in simple language (thread):

When we look at the world around us, we see many things that change. For example, at one time a man may be standing, but at another time he may be sitting. Yet he is the same man. (1/)

Philosophers express this fact by saying that the man's posture is contingent, i.e. that it could be different than it is. Humans are contingent beings because they could be different than they are at any given moment. The same is true of everything we see in the universe. (2/)

Living things like people, animals, and plants all grow and develop. Inanimate things like your car, phone, or computer may be turned on or off. Even rocks and gems can be cut, polished, or moved from one place to another. (3/)

All the things in the physical world are contingent: they could be different than they are.

But is absolutely everything contingent? Let's consider a man who is standing. Why is he standing *now*? (4/)

This question can be answered in different ways. You might appeal to something in the future (he's standing to reach something on a shelf) or to something in the past (he just got out of bed), but we're not interested in these. Why is he standing *right now*? (5/)

You could say, "Well, he's tensing certain muscles in his body to stand." True! But we can go even deeper. On a more basic level, there are chemical and electrical processes in his cells that cause the right muscles to tense. And we can go further yet, down to the level...(6/)

...of atoms and the particles they are made of. If we wanted, we could explain why he's standing in terms of the positions of all the particles in his body and the forces governing how they interact. This is the deepest kind of explanation science can currently provide. (7/)

But we can ask still-deeper questions: why do these particles exist at all? Why don't they just disappear?

Scientists have proposed principles dealing with the conservation of mass and energy to explain why the atoms in the man's body continue to exist. (8/)

They've also proposed forces that govern the interactions of the particles in the atoms. Currently, we know of four: gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces. These forces obey rules or laws of their own. But our curiosity still isn't satisfied. (9/)

Why are there 4 fundamental forces? Why do they obey certain laws and not others?

One day, it may be possible to explain the current laws of physics in terms of a deeper, more fundamental set of laws. But this would only push the question back one level. (10/)

Why are *they* the way they are and not some other way? At some point, we must hit a fundamental explanation for why things are they are, one where it no longer makes sense to ask, "Why is it this way rather than another way?" (11/)

It would not be an explanation that is contingent but one that is necessary—something that couldn't be different than it is. And the first and necessary explanation for why things are the way they are is a basic definition of "God."(12/)

The alternative would be to say that there is an infinite regress of explanations, with each level needing to be explained by something deeper without end. For some, this might be an appealingly poetic idea, but there are problems with it. (13/)

First, we have no evidence for an infinite regress of explanations. We should not invent a complicated answer to this when a simpler one fits better.

Another problem is that, in the end, an infinite regress wouldn't explain anything. (14/)

It doesn't provide an answer to why anything exists at all—it just pushes the question back forever. The whole universe would thus be left unexplained.

Remember that not absolutely everything needs a cause or explanation. Only things that are contingent...(15/)

...(i.e. could be other than they are, like a man who could stand or sit) do. Everything we see in the physical world is contingent, so to explain why these things exist we need not another contingent thing but a necessary one—something that simply MUST exist. (16/)

That something is God. By definition, God does not need a cause or explanation. He is the First Cause and Ultimate Explanation. (17/17)

Postscript: This is one argument for God's existence, but it says nothing about his attributes, the trinity, Christianity, and the Catholic Church. Want to learn about those and more? Get "The Words of Eternal Life" for free right here: https://t.co/2JU5HrICrF