

We're asked to consider the age old question of whether logic or ontology came first; let me first clarify exactly what I take this question to mean. Metaphysically speaking, ontology deals with identifying the types of things that actually exist, perhaps some sort of entity, substance or beings of particular types (formal Platonic theory fits this definition quite nicely); it is a description of the concepts and relationships between "things" in the universe. Logic concerns itself with reasoning, arriving at the correct conclusion given a set of criteria; it describes the relationship between symbols or meanings of symbols (some of which have a one-to-one association with things in the universe). Given these definitions, it would seem that logic and ontology are essentially the same thing, simply understood in different ways, thus the question becomes a sort of chicken-and-egg issue, an enigma that is rather difficult to comprehend...or maybe not.

There must be something that underlies the assumptions made by both ontological and logical systems; both are predicated on the actual existence of things in the universe. The true nature of those things is irrelevant in this discussion, however. Having set the groundwork, we must then wonder about our own understanding of such existence, how we view reality. Humans don't necessarily think logically most of the time, and in fact most people are rather irrational. Further, Niels Bohr once stated that nature is not bound by logical limits, and I believe this to be correct. Trying to rectify our perceptions of reality with logic is rather futile simply because it is not in our makeup. How then can logic possibly be an accurate reflection of the universe? It can be argued that logic is in fact merely a system created because of the problems with natural languages. Logic is analogous to mathematics in its problem solving methods, and ambiguity in both is

unacceptable, a problem that occurs all too frequently in normal speech. Ontological systems, however, are typically ambiguous in nature, often rather convoluted and difficult to understand fully. That seems closer to reality as we experience it; things happen all the time that don't fit into the rigid systems we've created to explain them (logic and math). A system such as Platonic Forms, however, can typically explain such happenings, albeit not completely or accurately.

Considering the above, it would appear that ontology must have come first. Ontology is an explanation of these experiences, a way of systematically illustrating how the universe operates underneath the limitations of our minds. Logic however is based on the admonishment of our own perceptions of reality; we assume we incorrectly perceive what actually occurs and need a system to accurately describe it. Surely ontological arguments often include clauses about the incapability of humans to truly know what is going on, but logic attempts to create something that we can in fact comprehend, giving us insight about reality. It follows that logic assumes ontology to be a failed effort in some ways, and so obviously it must have arisen from that failure.

Logic has its place as a system of thought that can provide us with all sorts of interesting facts about the universe, but we must be cognizant of the fact that it is still a system we created to explain the unexplainable. I'll stick with conventional ontological systems for questions about pure metaphysics; I just don't think logic can adequately explain reality any more than mathematics can.