

I. Arguments for the Existence of God

A. Two types of arguments for God's existence

1. A priori arguments
2. A posteriori arguments

B. Attitudes toward arguments for God's existence

1. Arguments are psychologically unconvincing: proof is convincing only when people are already predisposed to believe.
2. Arguments are logically invalid: they all beg the question.
3. Arguments are epistemologically defective: the mind and our knowledge construct reality (phenomena), but do not correspond to ultimate reality or things in themselves (noumena).
4. Arguments are ontologically inadequate: what is rationally inescapable may not necessarily be the ontologically real.
5. Arguments are axiologically misplaced: rational proofs are not of prime importance in one's religious experience

II. *A posteriori* arguments for God's existence (arguments from experience)

A. Cosmological arguments¹: Beginning/Beginnner; Contingency/necessity

1. The Kalam Cosmological argument

- Everything that begins to exist has a cause of its existence.
- The universe began to exist (Big Bang Cosmology)
- Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.

2. Atemporal cosmological argument

- A contingent being exists.
- This contingent being has a cause or explanation of the its existence
- The cause or explanation of its existence is something other than the contingent being itself (if it were, it also would need an explanation leading to infinite regress)
- What causes or explains the existence of this contingent being must either be other contingent beings or a noncontingent being (that is, a necessary being)
- Contingent beings alone cannot ultimately cause or explain the existence of a contingent being.

¹ Based largely on Norman Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion*, Zondervan, 1974, and on Michael Peterson, et. al. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 3rd ed. Oxford: 2003, chp. 5.

- Therefore, what causes and explains the existence of this contingent being must include a noncontingent, necessary being
- Therefore, a necessary being (God) exists.

B. Teleological arguments: Design/Designer

- All design implies a designer.
- Great design implies a great designer.
- There is great design in the world (like that of a great machine; human eye, male/female relation, DNA, etc.).
- Therefore, there must be a great Designer of the world, viz., God.

1. Analogical teleological argument (William Paley, 1743-1805)

a. A watch shows that it was put together for an intelligent purpose to keep time.

- It has a spring to give it motion.
- It has a series of wheels to transmit this motion.
- The wheels are made of brass so that they do not rust.
- The spring is made of steel because of the resilience of the metal.
- The front cover is of glass so that one can see through it.

b. The world shows an even greater evidence of design than a watch.

- The world is a greater work of art than a watch.
- The world has a more subtle and complex design than a watch.
- The world has an endless variety of means adapted to ends.

c. Therefore, if a watch calls for the watch maker, then the world demands an even greater intelligent Designer, viz., God.

2. Probabilistic teleological argument

- Though Darwin argued that the order of the universe is not the result of conscious activity (Mind/God), natural selection cannot explain how natural elements gave rise to life nor why these elements should give rise to living as opposed to nonliving things.
- The entire process of organic development invokes information processing (information chains in RNA). Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*.
- Natural selection is directionless, suggesting that only the fit survive, but placing no requirements or direction on the fit toward greater complexity which is obvious.

- d. Anthropic arguments suggest a fine tuned universe as the prerequisite for life.

C. Moral arguments: morality/Moral Law Giver

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

1. There must be a universal moral law or else—
 - a. Disagreements would make no sense.
 - b. All criticisms are meaningless (e.g., the Nazis are wrong)
 - c. Promise and treaty keeping are unnecessary.
 - d. We would not make excuses for breaking the moral law.
2. This moral law cannot be just herd instinct or herd mentality.
3. This moral law cannot be simply convention.
4. This moral law cannot be identified with the law of nature.
5. This moral law cannot be mere fancy.
6. Man is the key to understanding this moral law because:
 - a. He knows that moral oughts (prescriptions-what I ought to do) cannot simply be derived from what morally is (descriptions-what is done).
 - b. The source of this moral law must be more like man (mind) than nature (matter). Moral laws come from minds, not matter.
 - c. The source of the moral law cannot merely be part of the physical universe.
7. Therefore, there is an absolutely perfect power outside of mankind which more like mind than anything we know:
 - a. It gives us moral commands.
 - b. It is very much interested in our behavior (in keeping the commands it gives).
 - c. If it were not absolutely good, then all moral effort would be futile in the long run.
 - d. This source of morality must be absolutely good (for the standard for good cannot be less than good himself).
 - e. This kind of source for morality is God.

III. *A priori* Ontological arguments for God's Existence (arguments from the idea of God alone) —St. Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109)

A. The first argument:

1. God is by definition that than which nothing greater can be conceived.
2. It is one thing to exist in the understanding and another thing to exist both in the understanding and outside the understanding (e.g., a painting existing only in the painter's mind and existing on canvas, too).
3. It is greater to exist both in the understanding and outside the understanding than in the understanding only.

4. Therefore, God must exist both in the understanding and outside the understanding (in reality), for if He did not, then we could conceive of One who did, which would be greater. But God by definition is the greatest Being conceivable.
5. Hence, God must exist.

B. The second argument (*Proslogion*, chp. 3)

1. Statement one:

- a. It is logically necessary to affirm of a necessary existent what is logically necessary to the concept of it.
- b. Real existence is logically necessary to the concept of a necessary existent.
- c. Hence, it is logically necessary to affirm that a necessary existent exists.

2. Statement two:

- a. If God exists, his existence is necessary.
- b. If God does not exist, his existence is impossible.
- c. Either God exists or God does not exist.
- d. God's existence is either necessary or impossible.
- e. God's existence is possible (not impossible).
[5b. God's existence is impossible (not possible)].
- f. Therefore, God 's existence is necessary.
[6b. Therefore, God's does not exist.]

IV. St. Thomas Aquinas' "Five Ways" of proving God's existence

1. The first way: motion

- a. Things do move (motion is the most obvious form of change).
- b. Change is passing from potency to act (that is, from potentiality to actuality).
- c. Nothing passes from potency to act except by something that is in act, for it is impossible for a potentiality to actualize itself.
- d. There cannot be an infinite regress of actualizers or movers. If there is no first mover, there can be no subsequent motion, since all subsequent motion depends on prior movers for its motion.
- e. Therefore, there must be a first unmoved mover, a pure act or actualizer with no potentiality in it which is unactualized.
- f. Everyone understands this to be GOD!

2. The second way: efficient cause

- a. There are efficient causes in the world, that is, producing causes.
- b. Nothing can be the efficient cause of itself, for it would have to be prior to itself in order to cause itself).
- c. There cannot be an infinite regress of essentially related efficient causes, for unless there is a first cause of the series there would be no causality in the series.
- d. Therefore, there must be a first uncaused efficient cause of all efficient causality in the world.
- e. Everyone gives to this the name of GOD!

3. The third way: possibility and necessity

- a. There are beings that begin to exist and cease to exist, that is, possible, contingent beings.
- b. But not all beings can be possible beings, because what comes to exist does so only through what already exists; nothing cannot cause something.
- c. Therefore, there must be a Being whose existence is necessary, that is, one that never came into being and will never cease to be.
- d. There cannot be an infinite regress of necessary beings each of which has its necessity dependent on another, because:
 - 1. An infinite regress of dependent causes is impossible.
 - 2. A necessary Being cannot be a dependent being.
- e. Therefore, there must be a first Being which is necessary in itself, and not dependent on another for its existence.
- f. Everyone understands this to be GOD!

4. The fourth way: degree or gradation (of perfection in things)

- a. There are different degrees to perfections among beings, for some are more nearly perfect than others.
- b. But things cannot be more or less perfect unless there is a wholly perfect being.
- c. Whatever is perfect is the cause of the less than perfect (the higher is the cause of the lower).
- d. Therefore, there must be a perfect Being which is the cause of perfections of the less than perfect beings.

- e. This we call GOD!

5. The fifth way: design

- a. We see that things that lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end.
- b. They achieve their end not by chance, but by design.
- c. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end unless it be directed toward that end by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence, as the arrow is directed by the archer.
- d. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are ordered to their end;
- e. This being we call God.

6. The generic argument behind all five arguments

- a. Some dependent beings exist.
- b. All dependent beings and their characteristics must have a cause for their dependent existence.
- c. An infinite regress of existentially dependent causes is impossible.
- d. Therefore, there must be a first uncaused Cause of the existence of every dependent being and its characteristics.
- e. This independent Being is identical with the I AM of Holy Scripture.