



The Existence of God



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Defining our terms for this class:

- **Proof** or Proving something: To demonstrate something is TRUE or FALSE by means of the scientific method or scientific experimentation.
- **Evidence:** Presenting facts and figures that support an argument.
- **God:** A spiritual, substantial, personal, infinite being, infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection. Absolutely simple or lacking composition, unchanging, happy in Himself, and infinitely superior to all that is or can be conceived apart from Himself. He is incomprehensible in His infinite perfection by all lesser intelligences, although knowable as to His existence.
- **Cause and Effect:** e.g. I turn on a light switch (cause) and a light comes on (effect)
- **Evil:** The absence of a good that ought to be there.
- **Mercy:** To alleviate or remove the suffering of another.
- **Love:** An act of the *will* that puts the needs of “the other” before yours. Love is “dying to self.”
- **Murder:** The intentional killing of an innocent life.
- **Good:** That which is oriented towards our final end – heaven.
- **Soul:** That which makes a living thing what it is. (Human soul, plant soul, dog soul . . .)
- **Objective Truth:** That which is true regardless of how I feel or what I believe about it.
- **Subjective Truth:** That which is true because I think or feel that is true. It depends on my opinion.

I. Points to make or discuss regarding the existence of God

1. Difficulty in understanding something does not mean the object is FALSE, NON-EXISTENT or incapable of being known to some extent. “I do not understand it, therefore I don’t believe” it is an illogical statement.
 - a. I don’t understand how science can split an atom, but I know it is true because of the existence of nuclear weapons.
 - b. I cannot comprehend how a microchip works, but I know they exist because of computers and smartphones.
 - c. God cannot ever be fully understood, but we can know He exists and understand His attributes (love, justice, mercy, etc.) to a certain extent. We may never know why He acts a certain way or allows things to happen in this life, but we must TRUST Him, because He is trustworthy.
2. If something is TRUE we should accept it, because it is true. If it is FALSE, we should reject it, because it is false.
 - a. Our very lives depend on certain truths, such as the fact that we must breathe oxygen, eat food and drink water for us to live. What is truth? **Truth = Reality.**
 - b. Human nature desires the truth even if it is only a perceived truth. The person who sincerely argues in favor of the Relativism may truly believe it to be correct. (Relativism says, “Whatever you believe is true for you, so long as you don’t hurt anyone.” You have “your” truth & I have “my” truth. It’s also self-contradicting)
 - c. If something is true regarding the existence of God, we should accept it, even if it conflicts with our beliefs, feelings or opinions.

3. Just because we believe something is true, doesn't make it TRUE. It must be logical, reasonable and able to be supported with evidence.
 - a. If one says, "I don't believe it is wrong to take 'small' items from people or items they don't 'need' without their knowledge" does this make it OK with the person that is being robbed? No. There is a certain "reasonableness" that tells us we should not steal (*natural law* and *conscience*)
 - b. Or if I say, "I don't believe that slavery is wrong" does it automatically make it true?
4. "I can't prove it, therefore I don't believe it" is illogical and unreasonable.
 - a. Can you physically prove that there is a brain in your head without opening your skull? No. You can only provide evidence there is a brain in your head through effects such as the fact that you are alive and can think and talk.
 - b. We know things exist because of their EFFECTS. We can't see heat radiating from the sun, but we feel the effect of the burning sun. A blind person can know it is daytime by going outside and experiencing the *effects* of the radiating sun.
 - c. We may not "see" God, but we experience the effects of His existence.
 - i. Spiritual emotions (e.g. having a relationship with God)
 - ii. Miracles
 - iii. Grace working in the virtues. Humans are not virtuous by nature.
 - iv. Ultimately in the fullness of revelation through Jesus Christ.
5. To accept a position as *possibly true*, you must show that arguments (evidence) in favor of the position are stronger than the arguments (evidence) against it.
 - a. When an objection to a "standard" belief or notion is raised, note that by definition, the ***exception proves the rule***. (e.g. "Gravity causes things to fall – that is the RULE. "Helium balloons do not fall, they rise." – the EXCEPTION)
 - b. There are much more *evidence to believe in God* than reasons not to believe. Suffering, poverty, moral evil and diseases may make it difficult to believe in a loving God, but ***do not prove*** that God does not exist. More later . . .
6. Making the statement, "Prove to me there is a God." is an illogical proposition.
 - a. This proposition is illogical because you cannot prove its opposite - that there is no God. Scientifically, you must be able to prove a proposition's opposite to have a certainty of proof.
 - b. We cannot "prove" there is a God, but we are rational beings and can deduce by reason to believe that there is a God (e.g. by experience, the cosmos, the human body, using St. Thomas Aquinas' logic, etc.) More on this later . . .
7. There is such a thing as OBJECTIVE TRUTH.
 - a. $2+2 = 4$ (always!)
 - b. On earth, gravity makes things fall downward, not upward.
 - c. Humans are religious animals. Blaise Pascal said there are two types of persons, those who are afraid to lose God and those who are afraid they might find Him.
8. Human nature desires only things that are GOOD.
 - a. No reasonable person wishes to have bad things happen to them.
 - b. Even the person who commits suicide is longing for the good, even if it is only a *perceived* good. They believe that dying is better than living.
 - c. This desire for the good is really a desire for the greatest Good itself, God.
9. The Natural Law
 - a. We have an internal sense that calls for justice, proper conduct (moral goodness) and distinguishing "right from wrong."
 - b. There is a law within us that we did not place there nor create and it can help guide us to the truth. (***Rom. 1:18***) This law presumes a lawgiver who placed them in our very being. We call this lawgiver, God.

- c. Murder, stealing, cheating, lying, adultery are morally wrong and violations of the natural law. You don't need to be "religious" to know there are natural laws. It is summed up in the statement, "Do good and avoid evil."
10. The Dignity of the Human Person
 - a. If we are all products of chance, as the Theory of Evolution claims, then a human has no greater dignity than a plant or a rock who are also products of chance.
 - b. If "survival of the fittest" is true, as it is in nature, I should be able to take things from those who are weaker and it would not be "morally" wrong - it is natural. It is interesting that human beings are the only animals that don't follow the law of "survival of the fittest." We are the exception.
 - c. What makes us different? The fact that we have a rational soul and free will given to us by our Creator, God.
 - d. We were created out of love in the image and likeness of God (*Gen 2:7*). This is why we have dignity and why we are different than all the animals.
 11. The Principle of Cause and Effect. (Similar to Aquinas' Prime Mover argument)
 - a. Newton's first law of physics states that an object will remain at rest until acted upon by another force. Scientifically speaking, every effect has its cause.
 - b. The creation of the universe has a beginning when all matter was at rest.
 - c. If this is true then there has to be a cause (the First Cause) that was not itself a product of another cause or the problem goes on infinitely and that is not reasonable. We call this First Cause, God.
 12. The Problem of Suffering (or Evil) does not "prove" that God does not exist
 - a. If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why does he allow innocent children to suffer? God's ultimate goal is that we achieve eternal life with Him in heaven.
 - b. We must distinguish between God's **positive** will and His **permissive** will. God positively wills all the good that happens. He permits suffering only when he foresees that **good can** result from it. (Joseph-son of Jacob, Job)
 - c. If God foresees that my good health would lead me to sin and lose my salvation, then He may permit my health to be ruined and lead me to salvation.
 - d. There would be no suffering had man not sinned and chosen to do evil. God did not will sin, but having given us free will, He permitted it and its consequences. This permission was a less serious thing than depriving us of our freedom to choose.
 13. The Problem of Exclusivity (There is no other name ... by which men can be saved – (*Acts 4:12*)
 - a. Those who do not know Jesus Christ, much less profess a faith in Him, are not automatically condemned to hell.
 - b. Those who through no fault of their own . . . may be saved (CCC 847)
 - c. There are exceptions for "those who do not have the law, but who by nature keep the law." (*Rom 2:14ff*)
 - d. Invincible ignorance – ignorance that cannot be overcome. In our day and age, invincible ignorance is difficult to have as an excuse.
 14. Scientific evidence of God's existence
 - a. Statistically, we should not exist, yet we do. For our planet to sustain life multiple factors all had to be finely tuned. We have a one in 10^{-166} chance of existing based on 128 cosmic and biological parameters.¹ In comparison, there are only 1

¹ Ross, Hugh. *The Creator and the Cosmos*, Navpress, 3rd edition, 2001.

x 10⁸⁰ atoms in the universe. (the list of parameters is growing as science make new discoveries)

- b. **Irreducible complexity** – a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function of the system, wherein the ***removal of any one of the parts causes the system to cease functioning***. Any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional.² Irreducibly complex systems have to be completely functional at their creation (the human cell, for example) and could not have evolved by gradual mutations as Charles Darwin theorized.

II. To the Believer - Other Ways We Know God Exists

1. Divine Revelation - God has revealed Himself
 - a. Sacred Tradition - Tradition handed down by the Apostles
 - b. Sacred Scripture - The Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit
2. Jesus Christ - The Word Incarnate - God becomes Man
 - a. No other figure in history was preceded by a long list of prophecies, such as where he was to be born or where he would be raised as a child, how he was to be born and how he was to die.
 - b. No other figure in history has been resurrected by his very own power.
 - c. There is no body to discredit the resurrection. We have the remains of every major religious figure that lived - except for Jesus (and Mary).
 - d. There are witnesses to the resurrection. They even died for the truth of the resurrection. Some will say that the disciples lied about the resurrection. It is not probable since it is difficult to die for the truth, even more so to die for a lie.
3. The Church - only God could preserve the Church and her teachings for 2000 years.
 - a. No other institution has survived the test of time and maintained its foundational teachings consistently for this long.
 - b. The holiness of the Saints - One cannot explain how a person can live the life of holiness that these men and women have lived unless God is working in their lives through grace.
4. Miracles
 - a. Science has no explanation for the countless miracles that occur even to this day.
 - b. It should be noted that as Christians, we should not look to miracles as "proof" that God exists. We walk by faith not by sight. (*2 Cor 5:7*)
5. St. Thomas Aquinas' proofs of God: See Appendix A - *Summa Theologica (Part 1, Question 2, Article 3)*
 - a. First Mover
 - b. First Cause
 - c. Possibility and Necessity
 - d. Gradation (Worst > Bad > Good > Best)
 - e. Intelligent Design

Top 10 Rules for discussing the subject of the existence of God

- Always define your terms. Don't assume they "know" what you mean.

² Behe, Michael J., *Darwin's Black Box – The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1996. Page 39.

- Don't try to convert the person to your position. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. Your job is to inform.
- Make your points from logic, reason, and experience instead of from the Bible or Church dogmas. A non-believer will not hold the latter two items as being authoritative.
- Don't try to cover everything in the first discussion. Make some solid points that the person will need to ponder and for which they will need to look for answers.
- Do all things in CHARITY. Do it because of the love for the other person's soul, not for the satisfaction of winning an argument.
- If you can't answer a question or explain why their position is not correct, don't make up an answer. Say, "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you."
- If you become irritated or angry, stop and apologize. If you cannot continue in a charitable manner, don't resume the talk. You may do more damage than good.
- It is best, if possible, to become a friend with this person(s) before beginning a theological discussion. There is less finger pointing and judging if you are friends.
- Don't assume God chose YOU for the task of explaining the faith to this person. Don't force discussions or debates.
- Always pray for wisdom and the words to say before engaging in any type of debate or discussion.

Appendix A

Theologica (Part 1, Question 2, Article 3)

The first and more manifest way is the **argument from motion**. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

The second way is from the **nature of the efficient cause**. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an

ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

The third way is taken from **possibility and necessity**, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence--which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but **there must exist something the existence of which is necessary**. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate **the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity**. This all men speak of as God.

The fourth way is taken from the **gradation to be found in things**. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that **there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being**; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there **must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God**.

The fifth way is taken from the **governance of the world**. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now **whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence**; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore **some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God**.

1 - FIRST MOVER: Some things are in motion, anything moved is moved by another, and there can't be an infinite series of movers. So there must be a first mover (a mover that isn't itself moved by another). This is God.

2 - FIRST CAUSE: Some things are caused, anything caused is caused by another, and there can't be an infinite series of causes. So there must be a first cause (a cause that isn't itself caused by another). This is God.

3 - NECESSARY BEING: Every contingent being at some time fails to exist. So, if everything were contingent, then at some time there would have been nothing -- and so there would be nothing now -- which is clearly false. So not everything is contingent. So, there is a necessary being. This is God.

4 - GREATEST BEING: Some things are greater than others. Whatever is great to any degree gets its greatness from that which is the greatest. So, there is a greatest being, which is the source of all greatness. This is God.

5 - INTELLIGENT DESIGNER: Many things in the world that lack intelligence act for an end. Whatever acts for an end must be directed by an intelligent being. So, the world must have an intelligent designer. This is God.