

St. Thomas Aquinas: The Existence of God can be proved in five ways.

The First Way: Argument from Motion

1. Our senses prove that some things are in motion.
2. Things move when potential motion becomes actual motion.
3. Only an actual motion can convert a potential motion into an actual motion.
4. Nothing can be at once in both actuality and potentiality in the same respect (i.e., if both actual and potential, it is actual in one respect and potential in another).
5. Therefore nothing can move itself.
6. Therefore each thing in motion is moved by something else.
7. The sequence of motion cannot extend *ad infinitum*.
8. 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: Argument from Efficient Causes

1. We perceive a series of efficient causes of things in the world.
2. Nothing exists prior to itself.
3. Therefore nothing is the efficient cause of itself.
4. If a previous efficient cause does not exist, neither does the thing that results.
5. Therefore if the first thing in a series does not exist, nothing in the series exists.
6. The series of efficient causes cannot extend *ad infinitum* into the past, for then there would be no things existing now.
7. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

The Third Way: Argument from Possibility and Necessity (Reductio argument)

1. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, that come into being and go out of being i.e., contingent beings.
2. Assume that every being is a contingent being.
3. For each contingent being, there is a time it does not exist.
4. Therefore it is impossible for these always to exist.
5. Therefore there could have been a time when no things existed.
6. Therefore at that time there would have been nothing to bring the currently existing contingent beings into existence.
7. Therefore, nothing would be in existence now.
8. We have reached an absurd result from assuming that every being is a contingent being.
9. Therefore not every being is a contingent being.
10. Therefore some being exists of its own necessity, and does not receive its existence from another being, but rather causes them. This all men speak of as God.

The Fourth Way: Argument from Gradation of Being

1. There is a gradation to be found in things: some are better or worse than others.
2. Predications of degree require reference to the "uttermost" case (e.g., a thing is said

- to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest).
3. The maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus.
 4. 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: Argument from Design

1. We see that natural bodies work toward some goal, and do not do so by chance.
2. Most natural things lack knowledge.
3. But as an arrow reaches its target because it is directed by an archer, what lacks intelligence achieves goals by being directed by something intelligent.
4. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

ST. ANSELM'S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

From the Proslogium

Therefore, Lord, who grant understanding to faith, grant me that, in so far as you know it beneficial, I understand that you are as we believe and you are that which we believe. Now we believe that you are something than which nothing greater can be imagined.

Then is there no such nature, since the fool has said in his heart: God is not? But certainly this same fool, when he hears this very thing that I am saying - something than which nothing greater can be imagined - understands what he hears; and what he understands is in his understanding, even if he does not understand that it is. For it is one thing for a thing to be in the understanding and another to understand that a thing is.

For when a painter imagines beforehand what he is going to make, he has in his understanding what he has not yet made but he does not yet understand that it is. But when he has already painted it, he both has in his understanding what he has already painted and understands that it is. Therefore even the fool is bound to agree that there is at least in the understanding something than which nothing greater can be imagined, because when he hears this he understands it, and whatever is understood is in the understanding.

And certainly that than which a greater cannot be imagined cannot be in the understanding alone. For if it is at least in the understanding alone, it can be imagined to be in reality too, which is greater. Therefore if that than which a greater cannot be imagined is in the understanding alone, that very thing than which a greater cannot be imagined is something than which a greater can be imagined. But certainly this cannot be. There exists, therefore, beyond doubt something than which a greater cannot be imagined, both in the understanding and in reality.

The Problem of Evil

1. If God exists, then God is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect.
2. If God is omnipotent, then God has the power to eliminate all evil.
3. If God is omniscient, then God knows when evil exists.
4. If God is morally perfect, then God has the desire to eliminate all evil.
5. Evil exists.
6. If evil exists and God exists, then either God doesn't have the power to eliminate all evil, or doesn't know when evil exists, or doesn't have the desire to eliminate all evil.
7. Therefore, God doesn't exist.

The Problem of Free Will

The existence of an all-knowing god is incompatible with the fact of free will – that humans make choices. If god is omniscient god must know beforehand exactly what a person will do in a given situation. In that case, a person is not in fact free to do what god knows he or she will do, and free will must be an illusion. To take this one step further, if one chooses to commit a sin, how can it then be said that one sinned freely?

David Hume's critiques of Aquinas

Against #3 – “Whatever we can conceive as existent, we can conceive as nonexistent.” Why must the source of the universe be god? Why can't the ultimate source of the universe be the universe itself?

Against #5 – There is no legitimate way we can infer the properties of god as the creator of the world from the qualities of creation. How can we be sure the world was not created by a team; that this is not one of many attempts a creation – after a couple of mistakes and re-dos; or that this is not a poor first attempt “of an infant deity who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance?”