



Aquinas 5 Proofs for God exists

http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/aquinasFiveWays_ArgumentAnalysis.htm

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274):

The Existence of God can be proved in five ways.

Argument Analysis of the Five Ways © 2016 Theodore Gracyk

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.

Dr. Ching Lo rebuttal: Logic can defeat this **FIRST CAUSATION ARGUMENT**. Premise 1-7 are correct. But the Conclusion #8 is not the answer exclusively. Answer to Premise 1-6 is the input of activation energy to overcome inertia. This is Newtonian physics, body at rest will remain at rest; body in motion will remain in motion (friction excepted). The answer to #7 is the Big Bang which is not God. Motions subsequent to the Big Bang are governed by the Laws of Thermodynamics especially entropy. Answer to #8 is the Big Bang comes from Nothing (quantum fluctuation creating space-time). Since quantum fluctuation is probabilistic, there is neither design nor designer by definition. The most definitive logical argument against the necessity of a First Cause for the Big Bang is as follows: Cause must come before effect. The concept of cause-effect necessitates time; cause is before effect whereas effect is after cause. This before/after concept requires time however meniscus. Space-time emerged after the Big Bang; there is no time before the Big Bang. Therefore, there is no sense to speak of a cause for the Big Bang.

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 [in the world of things we perceive] is the efficient cause of itself.
4. If a previous efficient cause does not exist, neither does the thing that result (the effect).
5. Therefore if the first thing in a series does not exist, nothing in the series exists.
6. If the series of efficient causes extends ad infinitum into the past, for then there would be no things existing now.
7. That is plainly false (i.e., there are things existing now that came about through efficient causes).
8. Therefore efficient causes do not extend ad infinitum into the past.
9. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

Ching Lo: This is the famous **KALAM ARGUMENT** of Al-Kindi (810-873) based on **EVERYTHING COME TO EXIST AT AND FOR A SPECIFIC TIME**. The answer to #8 is the Big Bang, which is not God. Answer to #9 is the Big Bang comes from Nothing. Then God=Nothing.

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.

This is St. Thomas Aquinas's original and famous **CONTINGENCY ARGUMENT** based on the **NATURE OF EXISTENCE** (*accidental versus necessary, finite versus infinite, caused versus uncaused*). Premise 1-5 are correct and is known as "No Big Bang". #6 is answered by probabilistic quantum fluctuation in vacuum (Nothing). #7-9 correctly describe that the Big Bang is not a contingent thing. Then #10, Big Bang = 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.

Premise 1 "**better or worse**" are human prospective/opinion which vary among cultures, history and morality (e.g. slavery, gender inequality, polygamy, and homosexuality). There is no unchanging yardstick for "Better or worse". Religious fundamentalists today still regards their doctrine is so much better they have the right to kill non-believers. Therefore, Premise 1 is rejected because it is not the truth, it is an opinion. E.g. Why should we condemn killing among humans in competition for resources (we call war) while condone the same act in the rest of the animal kingdom (we call natural selection).

Premise 2 attempts to quantify degrees but done in the wrong (reversed) concept. E.g. temperature is quantified according to the lowest, not the highest, Absolute Zero. But we don't have a hottest reference temperature. The uttermost case is not necessary the "best, highest, hottest". Therefore, Premise 2 is rejected.

The Argument from Gradation of Being failed because Premise 3&4 are based on Premise 1-2.

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 intelligence.
4. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

Premise 1 is wrong. "Natural bodies work toward some goal" is a teleological argument. E.g. we see that all live forms evolve to survive. Thus, we subjectively regard survival is a goal. Goal is a human concept. Evolution is NOT species actively struggling to survive. Species diversify in their gene pool to produce varieties. Under Natural Selection, some varieties will survive, most do not. Species diversification is due

to DNA mutation, a largely random event. Premise #1 “...and do not do so by chance” the assumption is incorrect; random mutation and natural disaster are chances. The weak are unfit for survival and their gene becomes deleted from the pool.

Premise #2 is correct. Species do not have the knowledge about DNA mutation. See Daniel Dennett “Competence without Comprehension”. This makes Premise #3 metaphor irrelevant.

Conclusion #4 is rejected since Premise 1&3 are rejected.

Ching Lo Final remarks: In the absence of scientific knowledge of the Big Bang theory and quantum mechanics, Thomas Aquinas presented powerful arguments that are plausible for his time. That is why he is a saint and I admire his philosophical and logical approaches to theology. Even today, many people who have not heard of or do not understand/believe in the Big Bang or quantum mechanics would be persuaded by his arguments.

Today we can come up with much better arguments for the existence of God. By combining panpsychism, biocentrism and anthropic principles we can formulate a much more appealing teleological ontology. Such an ontological theory requires only one assumption, the primacy of consciousness. Quantum mechanics provided plenty of support for this assumption.

Ontological Arguments

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy *substantive revision Fri Feb 12, 2016*

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ontological-arguments/>

Definition: ontological arguments are arguments from nothing but analytic, *a priori* and necessary premises to the conclusion that God exists.

The first, and best-known, ontological argument was proposed by St. Anselm of Canterbury in the 11th Century C.E. In his *Proslogion*, St. Anselm claims to derive the existence of God from the concept of a being than which no greater can be conceived. St. Anselm reasoned that, if such a being fails to exist, then a greater being—namely, a being than which no greater can be conceived, and which exists—can be conceived. But this would be absurd: nothing can be greater than a being than which no greater can be conceived. So a being than which no greater can be conceived—i.e., God—exists.

8.1 Formulation 1

1. God exists in the understanding but not in reality. (Assumption for *reductio*)
2. Existence in reality is greater than existence in the understanding alone. (Premise)
3. A being having all of God's properties plus existence in reality can be conceived. (Premise)
4. A being having all of God's properties plus existence in reality is greater than God. (From (1) and (2).)
5. A being greater than God can be conceived. (From (3) and (4).)
6. It is false that a being greater than God can be conceived. (From definition of “God”.)

7. Hence, it is false that God exists in the understanding but not in reality. (From (1), (5), (6).)
8. God exists in the understanding. (Premise, to which even the Fool agrees.)
9. Hence God exists in reality. (From (7), (8).)

See Plantinga 1967.

Ching Lo:

In Step3, note carefully he is saying "God's...existence in reality can be conceived". He said "God exist" is a concept. Step 7 is a logical fallacy; a jump from "conceived existence" to "exist".

17th Century René Descartes "*Fifth Meditation*": Since we do conceive a supremely perfect being—we do have the idea of a supremely perfect being—we must conclude that a supremely perfect being exists.

Ching Lo: Descartes is illogical. We can conceive unicorn, which does not exist.

18th Century Leibniz argued that, since perfections are unanalysable, it is impossible to demonstrate that perfections are incompatible—and he concluded from this that all perfections can co-exist together in a single entity.

Ching Lo: The logic is one-sided. If "all perfections can co-exist together in a single entity" then it is equally possible that all perfections cannot or does not co-exist together in a single entity.