

PROOFS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

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DESCARTES' FIFTH MEDITATION

Arguments for
the Existence
of God

MEDITATION 3: CONCERNING GOD, THAT HE EXISTS



I. “EVERYTHING I VERY CLEARLY AND DISTINCTLY PERCEIVE IS TRUE”

A. So long as “it could [never] happen that something that I perceived so clearly and distinctly were false”

B. Basis for this ideal comes from the cogito

A. Because I can know that I exist through only this clear and distinct perception of myself, it follows that other things can be known through a clear and distinct perception, namely God.

C. Therefore, if God can be clearly and distinctly perceived then it follows that either my knowledge of God is a part of my substance, i.e. I am God, or that God exists and knowledge of God is innate within us.

II. DESCARTES' REASONING

A. There are different types of ideas which contain more or less objective reality

A. Innate

B. Adventitious (sense perceptions)

C. Manufactured (imaginings)

A. Ideas that display a “substance” contain more reality than ideas which are “modes or accidents”

B. substance defined: “Everything in which there immediately inheres, as in a subject, or through which there exists, something we perceive is called a “substance”.” i.e. bodies, minds, and God.

The idea of God has more objective reality than ideas which are expressed in finite substances

A. Something with less reality cannot produce something with more reality, something cannot come from nothing.

A. An effect must receive its reality from its cause. “What is more perfect cannot come into being from what is less perfect.”

B. For one to perceive an idea in the mind objectively, the cause of the idea then must as much formal reality within itself

REASONING CONTINUED

great that I am certain that the same reality was not in me...that therefore I myself cannot be the cause of the idea...[it follows] that I am not alone in the world”

A. Why the idea of God is unfashionable without his existence:

1. Corporeal things, imaginations of them, can originate from oneself; nothing belongs to bodies that does not belong to me: substance, duration, and number all belong to me.
2. The Idea of God
 1. Definition: “A certain substance that is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent and supremely powerful, and that created me along with everything else that exists – if anything else exists”
 2. None of these ideas could have originated from me therefore;
 1. God exists because there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one.
 3. One can conclude that knowledge of an infinite substance cannot arise from the negation of the finite in the same manner as one as one can determine rest from motion and darkness from light because of the fact that an infinite substance has more objective reality than a finite substance

B. And because this idea of God is clear and distinct, and because its origin is cannot be found in oneself, it necessarily follows that God exists.

CERTAINTY OF MATHEMATICAL OBJECTS

- Descartes states in the Fifth Meditation that he has always viewed mathematical/ geometrical statements as more certain than sensory objects.
- Analogy of the Triangle.

CERTAINTY OF GOD

- Like the analogy of the triangle, Descartes is also certain of the existence of God as an idea in his mind.
- It would be contradictory to think of a triangle with an interior angle sum of 180. Likewise, it would be contradictory to perceive a perfect God that did not exist; it is more perfect to exist than to not exist.

PROBLEM WITH THE PROPERTY OF EXISTENCE

- Descartes evidence on God is God's existence as an idea. Descartes claims that God's existence could be immediately recognized if it weren't for our mental preoccupations with opinions and the sense.
- The problem arises in Descartes' claim that existence is one of God's perfections.

GASSENDI'S OBJECTION

- Existence is not a property and cannot be compared with a property. Ex: Existence cannot be compared to the function of red or big for an object.
- Existence is only a medium for perfections to be apparent. It is not an intrinsic perfection.

SPINOZA'S *ETHICS*

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SPINOZA'S PROOF FOR GOD

- Depends on three arguments* :
 - Existence of Substance
 - Infinitude of Substance
 - Uniqueness of Substance
- Differences from Descartes and Leibniz
- Objections

*From Tlumak via Marcus

RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

Definitions (*Ethics*, Part 1, Definitions):

1. By that which is self-caused I mean that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing.
2. A thing is finite in its own kind when it can be limited by another thing of the same nature.
3. Substance is in itself and conceived through itself; that the conception of which does not require the conception of another thing from which it have to be formed.
6. God is an absolutely infinite being; a substance containing infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.

RELEVANT AXIOMS

Axioms (*Ethics*, Part 1, Axioms):

1. All things that are, are either in themselves or in something else.
2. That which cannot be conceived through another thing must be conceived through itself.

EXISTENCE OF SUBSTANCE

E1. Substance is independent .

- Def. 3

E2. Whatever has an external cause can not be independent.

- Negation of Ax. 2

E3. So, substance has no external cause, and must be its own cause.

- Def. 3 + Ax. 2

E4. Anything which is its own cause must exist.

- Def. 1

EC. So substance exists.

INFINITUDE OF SUBSTANCE

I1. Substance exists and is its own cause.

- Existence of Substance

I2. No finite thing is its own cause.

- Def. 2
- Cause is tied to explanation which requires other things

I3. An infinite substance must have all attributes.

- By definition, infinite is interpreted the same as in Def. 6.

IC. So, substance must be infinite, and have all attributes

UNIQUENESS OF SUBSTANCE

U1. Substance is infinite, and has all attributes.

- From Infinitude of Substance

U2a. There cannot be two substances with the same attribute.

- From Def. 3 and Def. 5 it is evident that substance is prior to its affections
- Prop. 4

U3. So, at most one substance exists.

U4. Substance exists.

UC. So, there is exactly one substance; we can call it God, or Nature

- From Def. 6

OBJECTIONS/CONNECTIONS

- Definition of God
 - Compared to Descartes and Leibniz
 - From Appendix One, we cannot know God's will
 - Separation would limit an infinite God
- Problem of Error
 - If we are part of an infinite God, how can we err?
 - Unlike Leibniz and Descartes, no free will
 - All ideas hold an amount of truth

LEIBNIZ

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LEIBNIZ'S ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

- Leibniz's argument rests strongly on the foundation that Descartes established concerning God's perfection and existence.
- Leibniz agreed with Descartes that God was a infinite being that was a composite of all the world's perfections.
- Leibniz argued that just because existence is a perfection, doesn't mean that God necessarily exist.

CONTINUED

- Leibniz however, didn't feel that Descartes had done enough to prove that this being could exist.
- Leibniz then explained that because something that is perfect is simple
- Simple, unanalyzable, cant analyze and prove that they are incompatible
- They (that is, two perfect things) cannot be said to be incompatible, which means that they are compatible. So there is a being capable of containing all perfections.

CONTINUED

- Then Leibniz explained how if we continue look back through history trying to say, “what caused that?” It will continue on forever, essentially creating an infinite series. This series must have had an original cause outside of the series. That cause was God.
- Leibniz then goes onto explain that God is an infinite substance that contains all perfections.

CONCLUSION

- Leibniz asserts that a substance has the ability to contain multiple perfections in one being.
- He then explains that the cause or definition of all things could not have originated in this infinite series, and so therefore something must exist outside of our realm of understanding.
- This original cause must be God.

THE POSSIBILITY OF DIVINE NATURE

- Some say that so long as they have the idea of God he must exist
- Leibniz says we have the idea of impossible chimeras but they do not exist just because of our idea of them
- There are true and false ideas depending on whether the thing is possible
- Only when we are certain of a thing's possibility can we say we have an idea of it

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

- 1. God is a being having all perfections
- 2. A perfection is a simple and absolute property
- 3. Existence is a perfection
- 4. If existence is a part of the essence of a thing, than it is a “necessary being”
- 5. If it is possible for a necessary being to exist, then it does
- 6. It is possible for a being to have all perfections
- 7. Therefore, a necessary being (God) exists

“THAT A MOST PERFECT BEING EXISTS”

- God is a “being by virtue of itself or essence”
- Since the essence of a thing is that which constitutes its possibility, then to exist by virtue of essence is to exist by virtue of possibility
- The only way to disprove God’s existence is to disprove the possibility of his existence
- But if a being by virtue of itself is impossible, any other being by virtue of another thing is also impossible, thus nothing could exist

COMPARISON

- Leibniz does not reject Descartes proof, he simply doesn't find it adequate
- Descartes and Leibniz use the same definition of God as a perfect being.
 - Spinoza rejects an anthropomorphic definition of God

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