

Proof of the Existence of God

The Argument from Miracles

1. A miracle is an event whose only adequate explanation is the extraordinary and direct intervention of God.
2. There are numerous well-attested miracles.
3. Therefore, there are numerous events whose only adequate explanation is the extraordinary and direct intervention of God.
4. Therefore, God exists.

The Argument from Time and Contingency

1. We notice around us things that come into being and go out of being. A tree, for example, grows from a tiny shoot, flowers brilliantly, then withers and dies.
2. Whatever comes into being or goes out of being does not have to be; nonbeing is a real possibility.
3. Suppose that nothing has to be; that is, that nonbeing is a real possibility for everything.
4. Then, right now nothing would exist. For,
5. If the universe began to exist, then all being must trace its origin to some past moment before which there existed—literally—nothing at all. But,
6. From nothing, nothing comes. So,
7. The universe could not have begun.
8. But, suppose the universe never began. Then, for the infinitely long duration of cosmic history, all being had the built-in possibility not to be. But,
9. If in an infinite time, that possibility was never realized, then it could not have been a real possibility at all. So,
10. There must exist something which has to exist, which cannot not exist. This sort of being is called necessary.
11. Either this necessity belongs to the thing in itself or it is derived from another. If derived from another, there must ultimately exist a being whose necessity is not derived, that is, an absolutely necessary being.
12. This “absolutely necessary being” is God.

The Argument from Contingency

The basic form of this argument is simple.

1. If something exists, there must exist what it takes for that thing to exist.
2. The universe – the collection of beings in space and time – exists.
3. Therefore, there must exist what it takes for the universe to exist.
4. What it takes for the universe to exist cannot exist within the universe or be bounded by space and time.
5. Therefore, what it takes for the universe to exist must transcend both space and time.

The Argument from Truth

1. Our limited minds can discover eternal truths about being.
2. Truth properly resides in a mind.
3. But the human mind is not eternal.
4. Therefore, there must exist an eternal mind in which these truths reside.

The Argument from Ideas

1. We have ideas of many things.
2. These ideas must arise either from ourselves or from things outside us.
3. One of the ideas we have is the idea of God—an infinite, all-perfect being.
4. This idea could not have been caused by ourselves, because we know ourselves to be limited and imperfect, and no effect can be greater than its cause.
5. Therefore, the idea must have been caused by something outside us which has nothing less than the qualities contained in the idea of God.
6. But only God himself has those qualities.
7. Therefore, God himself must be the cause of the idea we have of him.
8. Therefore, God exists.

The Ontological Argument Anselm's Version

1. It is greater for a thing to exist in the mind and in reality than in the mind alone.
2. "God" means "that than which a greater cannot be thought."
3. Suppose that God exists in the mind but not in reality.
4. Then a greater than God could be thought (namely, a being that has all the qualities our thought of God has plus real existence).
5. But, this is impossible, for God is "that than which a greater cannot be thought."
6. Therefore, God exists in the mind and in reality.