

Apologetics (CM4)

The Existence of God I

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Apologetics (CM4)

Jan. 30 – Introduction to Apologetics

Feb. 6 – Reliability of Witnesses

Feb. 13 – The Existence of God

Feb. 20 – The Existence of God 2

Feb. 27 – Creation, Prophecy & Miracles

Mar. 6 – The Risen Christ

Mar. 13 – Responding to the Arguments

Mar. 20 – Applying the Principles; Final Exam

Philosophical Apologetics & the Existence of God

Philosophical apologetics – concerns itself primarily with arguments for the existence of God.

- ▶ **Ontological argument**
- ▶ **Cosmological argument**
- ▶ **Kalam Cosmological argument**
- ▶ **Teleological argument**
- ▶ **Fine-Tuning Teleological Argument**
- ▶ **Moral argument**
- ▶ **Transcendental argument**
- ▶ **Presuppositional arguments**
- ▶ **Alvin Plantinga's argument that belief in God is properly basic**

Philosophical Apologetics & the Existence of God

➤ **Anselm's Ontological Argument**

- Suggests that the very idea of God logically proves His existence. (“*ontological*” means “being” or “existence”)
- The argument goes like this:
 - 1. I can conceive of a greatest conceivable being (GCB).
 - 2. What is real and concrete (outside my mind) is greater than what exists only in my mind.
 - 3. If the greatest conceivable being exists **ONLY** in my mind, then it would not be the greatest conceivable being (because I can conceive of the GCB existing in reality, and *not* just in my mind).
 - 4. Therefore, the greatest conceivable being **MUST** exist in reality.

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➤ **Aquinas' Cosmological Argument**

- The “argument from causation” suggests that, since every effect must have a cause, and there cannot logically be an infinite regression of causes, there must be a First Cause (or Prime Mover) which started everything.

- The argument goes like this:
 - 1. There is an order of causes in the world.
 - 2. Nothing can be the cause of itself.
 - 3. Therefore, everything that is caused must be caused by something else.
 - 4. There cannot be an infinite regression of causes.
 - 5. Therefore, there **MUST** be a first, uncaused cause (i.e., God).

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➤ **Kalam Cosmological Argument**

- a modern re-formulation of the cosmological argument, which has served as a key component of the revival of Christian apologetics in response to the New Atheism.
- The argument goes like this:
 1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause;
 2. The universe began to exist;
 3. *Therefore*, the universe has a cause.
 4. If the universe has a cause, then an uncaused, personal Creator of the universe exists, who is beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless and enormously powerful;
 5. *Therefore*: an uncaused, personal Creator of the universe exists, who is beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless and enormously powerful.

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➤ **Paley's Teleological Argument**

- The “argument from design,” or “watchmaker argument” says that the complexity of the world demands belief in a Creator, in the same way that the complexity of a watch demands belief in a watchmaker.
- The argument goes like this:
 - 1. A watch has many complex parts, works a specific and intentional function, and is intelligently designed to achieve that function.
 - 2. Similarly, the world has many complex parts, works a specific and intentional function (esp. the sustaining of life), and is intelligently designed to achieve that function.
 - 3. Therefore, there is a very high probability that the world – like the watch – was intelligently designed by a Creator.

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➤ **The Fine-Tuning Teleological Argument**

- A version of the teleological argument, this is based on scientific discoveries of “cosmic constants” which have existed since the Big Bang. If the values of the cosmic constants were even *very* slightly different, life on earth would not be possible.
- **1. Rate of Expansion of the Universe.** If this were different by as little as $1/10^{60}$ the universe would either have collapsed or would have expanded too rapidly for stars to form.
- **2. Strong Nuclear Force.** If the force that binds protons and neutrons together had been even 5% stronger or weaker, life would not have been possible.
- **3. Force of Gravity.** If gravity had been stronger or weaker by even $1/10^{40}$ then stars which can support life (like our sun) would not have been formed.

Twenty Arguments For The Existence Of God – Peter Kreeft

1. The Argument from Change
2. The Argument from Efficient Causality (Cosmological)
3. The Argument from Time and Contingency
4. The Argument from Degrees of Perfection
5. The Teleological (Design) Argument
6. The Kalam Cosmological Argument
7. The Argument from Contingency
8. The Argument from the World as an Interacting Whole
9. The Argument from Miracles
10. The Argument from Consciousness
11. The Argument from Truth
12. The Argument from the Origin of the Idea of God
13. The Ontological Argument
14. The Moral Argument
15. The Argument from Conscience
16. The Argument from Desire
17. The Argument from Aesthetic Experience
18. The Argument from Religious Experience
19. The Common Consent Argument
20. Pascal's Wager

Do we even need rational arguments for God's existence?

- Many modern philosophers and scientists maintain the principle of **evidentialism** – the view that *no belief should be held unless one has sufficient evidence for it*.
- There is strong logical evidence for the existence of God – but ***why should belief in God require evidence at all?***
- Why can't belief in God be seen as properly basic to our existence – that all people have a “*sense of the divine*” (as Calvin put it), in the same way that we have visual, auditory and other senses that require no further evidential support?
- **Reformed epistemology** proposes exactly that – insisting that belief in God is *properly basic* to humanity, and that those who do not have such belief are broken and blinded (by sin).
- **While we *have* good arguments for the existence of God, such arguments are not necessary for rational belief in God.**

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

1. God is omniscient; He knows all things that are logically possible to know.
 2. God is omnipotent; He is able to do anything that it is logically possible to do.
 3. God is omnibenevolent; He desires to do every good thing that can possibly be done.
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4. If God is omniscient, He is fully aware of all the pain and suffering that occurs.
 5. If God is omnipotent, He is able to prevent all pain and suffering.
 6. If God is omnibenevolent, He would want to prevent all pain and suffering.


Yet pain and suffering continue; *therefore*, God is either NOT all knowing, or NOT all-powerful; or NOT all-good; or He doesn't exist.

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1. If God is omniscient, He is fully aware of all the pain and suffering that occurs.
 2. If God is omnipotent, He is able to prevent all pain and suffering.
 - Yes, and God has shown His awareness and His compassion – by sharing in our humanity and suffering through Jesus; by limiting the suffering He allows (i.e., Job); and in lessening the suffering by providing healing and comfort, especially by the presence of His Holy Spirit.
 - Evil and suffering exist as a direct result of the misuse of human free will. For God to remove all suffering by fiat would irrevocably compromise human will and freedom – the consequences of which we cannot even imagine.
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The Problem of Evil and Suffering

3. If God is omnibenevolent, He would want to prevent all pain and suffering.
 - More accurately, God's benevolence means He desires the greatest good – which *may not* be the immediate relief of suffering. Pain often directs people back to God; people often grow best through suffering; and – again – much of what it means to be freely human seems almost to require the existence of suffering. We simply may not see far enough or clearly enough to understand.
 - This assumes physical suffering is the greatest evil, and stopping it is the greatest good – both of which may be wrong. The greatest evil is human rejection of God and His love; and the greatest good is in our returning to Him, to love and serve Him.
 - Our human lives are only a breath in God's eternity, and God will eventually make all things right in a heaven free from suffering – perhaps even (as C.S. Lewis suggests) to the point of God working retroactively to turn all past suffering into glory.