



*Psalm 106:1 Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all his praise? 3 Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!*

## **Week 5 - "The Existence of God"**

*Hebrews 11: 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

How do we know that God exists?

*Romans 1: 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

## **General Revelation and Specific Revelation**

God has revealed Himself, His character, and His glory through His creation.

We can begin to know him through what He did.

*Genesis 1: 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

*Genesis 1: 26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

General and Specific Revelation work together to "reveal" that the God that nature announces and the God of the Bible are one and the same.

But to use the Bible alone to "prove" the existence of God would again be circular thinking. We need to have and use other methods.

Philosophical thought is a very powerful tool.

## **Traditional Philosophical Proofs**

Most of the traditional proofs for the existence of God can be classified in four major types of argument:

I. The moral argument begins from man's sense of right and wrong, and of the need for justice to be done, and argues that there must be a God who is the source of right and wrong and who will someday mete out justice to all people.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Moral Argument**

The moral argument appeals to the existence of moral laws as evidence of God's existence. According to this argument, there couldn't be such a thing as morality without God; to use the words that Sartre attributed to Dostoyevsky, "If there is no God, then everything is permissible." That there are moral laws, then, that not everything is permissible, proves that God exists.

Some facts are facts about the way that the world is. It is a fact that cats eat mice because there are lots of animals out there, cats, and lots of them eat mice. It is a fact that Paris is the capital of France because there exists a city called Paris that is the capital of France. For most facts, there are objects in the world that make them true.

#### **Morality Consists of a Set of Commands**

Moral facts aren't like that. The fact that we ought to do something about the problem of famine isn't a fact about the way that the world is, it's a fact about the way that the world ought to be. There is nothing out there in the physical world that makes moral facts true.

This is because moral facts aren't descriptive, they're prescriptive; moral facts have the form of commands.

## Commands Imply a Commander

There are some things that can't exist unless something else exists along with them. There can't be something that is being carried unless there is something else that is carrying it. There can't be something that is popular unless there are lots of people that like it.

Commands are like this; commands can't exist without something else existing that commanded them.

The moral argument seeks to exploit this fact; *If moral facts are a kind a command*, the moral argument asks, *then who commanded morality?* To answer this question, the moral argument suggests that we look at the importance of morality.

## Morality is Ultimately Authoritative

Morality is of over-riding importance. If someone morally ought to do something, then this over-rides any other consideration that might come into play. It might be in my best interests not to give any money to charity, but morally I ought to, so all things considered I ought to. It might be in my best interests to pretend that I'm too busy to see my in-laws on Wednesday so that I can watch the game, but morally I ought not, so all things considered I ought not.

If someone has one reason to do one thing, but morally ought to do another thing, then all things considered they ought to do the other thing. Morality over-rides everything. Morality has ultimate authority.

## Ultimately Authoritative Commands Imply an Ultimately Authoritative Commander

Commands, though, are only as authoritative as the person that commands them. If I were to command everyone to pay extra tax so that we could spend more money on the police force, then no one would have to do so. I just don't have the authority to issue that command. If the government were to command everyone to pay extra tax so that we could spend more money on the police force, though, then that would be different, because it does have that authority.

As morality has more authority than any human person or institution, the moral argument suggests, morality can't have been commanded by any human person or institution. As morality has ultimate authority, as morality over-rides everything, morality must have been commanded by someone who has authority over everything. The existence of morality thus points us to a being that is greater than any of us and that rules over all creation.

## What the Moral Argument Proves

If the moral argument can be defended against the various [objections](#) that have been raised against it, then it proves the existence of an author of morality, of a being that has authority over and that actively rules over all creation. Together with the [ontological argument](#), the [first cause argument](#), and the [argument from design](#), this would give us proof that there is a perfect, necessary, and eternal being that created the universe with life in mind and has the authority to tell us how we are to run it. The correct response to this would be to seek God's will and to practice it.<sup>2</sup>

There are two options when it comes to morality. And only two!

1. Moral relativism - moral rules find their source in the individual that holds them.  
i.e. morality is relative to each individual person's opinion.

OR

2. Moral absolutism - there is a moral rule that stands outside of our opinion that judges us and it exists whether we agree with it or not.

There are truths that exist and apply to everyone:

It is wrong to torture babies for fun (even on your birthday), rape - could never be morally justified for anyone under any circumstance. Such a thing is obviously evil (sensed by our moral intuitions) because this could never be moral for anyone THEREFORE moral relativism is FALSE because no one can justify it.

That leaves only moral absolutism. THEREFORE Moral rules exist.

By reflecting, we know some things based on this conclusion.

Moral rules are not physical. They are not sensed with our five senses.

They are immaterial.

(THEREFORE immaterial things exist) They must have an origin

Options:

1. Immaterial stuff randomly arranging itself together by pure accident to give the moral laws (if true, how can they have moral force and moral gravity for us?)
2. From an agent who can act within the immaterial realm who made them, or gives the law – In our experience, every prescription has a prescriber. Every law has been given by a law giver. Every command has a commander authoring it.
3. The moral laws are transcendent, they apply to everyone of us.

The best explanation for the existence of transcendent, immaterial moral laws is a transcendent moral law giver. [rules in Islam's Allah, Judeo-Christian God & rules out Atheism, Buddhism & Hinduism]

Other implications:

- No Physical System is a Free Agent
- Therefore No Physical System Has Moral Responsibility
- Human Beings DO Have Moral Responsibility
- THEREFORE: Therefore Human Beings Are NOT Simply Physical Systems<sup>6</sup>

II. The ontological argument begins with the idea of God, who is defined as a being “greater than which nothing can be imagined.” It then argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist.

## **The Ontological Argument**

The ontological argument is an argument for God’s existence based entirely on reason. According to this argument, there is no need to go out looking for physical evidence of God’s existence; we can work out that he exists just by thinking about it. Philosophers call such arguments *a priori* arguments.

There clearly are certain claims that we can tell are false without even having to look into them to find out. The claim to have made a four-sided triangle, and the claim to be over six feet tall but less than five, for example, are both claims that are obviously false. We know that triangles have three sides. We know that being over six feet tall means being over five feet tall too. No one that understands what the words in these claims mean would think that they might be true. There’s no need to spend time looking for four-sided triangles or tall short people in order to know that there aren’t any.

The ontological argument claims that the idea that God doesn’t exist is just as absurd as the idea that a four-sided triangle does. According to the ontological argument, we can tell that the claim that God doesn’t exist is false without having to look into it in any detail. Just as knowing what “triangle” means makes it obvious that a four-sided triangle is impossible, the argument suggests, knowing what “God” means makes it obvious that God’s non-existence is impossible. The claim that God does not exist is self-contradictory.

### **The Definition of “God” Includes Perfection**

There are many things that something would have to be in order to be properly called “God”. For instance, it would have to be all-powerful, because a part of what “God” means is “all-powerful”. To call something that isn’t all-powerful God would be like calling a shape that doesn’t have three sides a triangle; to anyone who understands the words involved it just wouldn’t make sense. Another part of what “God” mean is “perfect”; something can’t properly be called God unless it is perfect. This is the key idea behind the ontological argument.

### **God is “That Than Which No Greater Can Be Conceived”**

If something is perfect, then it couldn’t possibly be better than it is; there can’t be anything better than perfection. This means that if a thing is perfect then it is impossible to imagine it being better than it is; there is nothing better than it is to imagine.

If we think of God as being perfect—and perfection, remember, is part of the concept of God—then we must therefore think of God as a being that cannot be imagined to be better than he is. As St Anselm, the inventor of the ontological argument, put it, God is “that than which no greater can be conceived.”

It is therefore impossible to conceive either of there being anything greater than God or of it being possible to imagine God being better than he already is.

### Atheists Are Therefore Confused

If we were to think of God as not existing, though, then we would be able to imagine him being better than he is; we would be able to imagine him existing, and a God that exists is clearly better than a God that doesn't. To think of God as not existing, then, is to think of God as being imperfect, because a God that doesn't exist could be better than he is.

The idea of an imperfect God, though, we have already said, is just as absurd as the idea of a four-sided triangle; "perfect" is part of what "God" means, just as "three-sided" is part of what "triangle" means. As the idea that God doesn't exist implies his imperfection, therefore, the idea that God doesn't exist is just as absurd, just as obviously false, as the idea that a four-sided triangle does. God's non-existence is therefore impossible.

### What the Ontological Argument Proves

Whether this argument is successful is controversial. There are a number of [objections to the ontological argument](#), which many, though not all, accept as decisive. If the ontological argument is successful, then it must be the case that God, "God" meaning "perfect being", exists.

This would establish a lot of what the monotheistic religions say about God to be true—if God is perfect then he is also omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, etc., just as the monotheistic religions say—but not all of it. It would show that there exists a God that is perfect in every way, but it would not demonstrate much about the relationship between that God and us.

The remaining arguments, in contrast, if they are successful, tell us less about what God is like but more about how he relates to us. The first of them is the [first cause argument](#), which seeks to establish the existence of a Creator.<sup>3</sup>

III. The cosmological (or first cause) argument considers the fact that every known thing in the universe has a cause. Therefore, it reasons, the universe itself must also have a cause, and the cause of such a great universe can only be God.

*"There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion," said he, leaning with his back against the shutters. "It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its color are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers."*  
~The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ~

## The First Cause Argument

The first cause argument (or “cosmological argument”) takes the existence of the universe to entail the existence of a being that created it. It does so based on the fact that the universe had a beginning. There must, the first cause argument says, be something that caused that beginning, a first cause of the universe.

The universe consists of a series of events stretched across time in a long causal chain. Each one of these events is the cause of the event that comes after it, and the effect of the event that comes before it. The world as it is came from the world as it was, which came from the world as it was before.

If we trace this series of events back in time, then what do we find? There seem, at first glance, to be two possibilities: either we eventually reach the first event in the series, the cause at the beginning of the universe that set everything going, or there is no first event in the series and the past stretches back into infinity.

The first cause argument tells us that the second of these is not possible, that the past cannot stretch back into infinity but rather must have a beginning. The argument then proceeds by suggesting that if the universe has a beginning then there must be something outside it that brought it into existence.

This being outside the universe, this Creator, the first cause argument tells us, is God.

### It's Impossible to Traverse an Infinite Series

If I told you that I had just counted down from infinity to zero, starting with “infinity minus zero” and carrying on until I reached “infinite minus infinity, i.e zero”, then you would know that this claim is false. Just as it is impossible to count up from zero to infinity, so it is impossible to count down from infinity to zero. If I had started counting down from infinity and kept going, then I would still be counting to this day; I would not have finished. My claim to have counted down from infinity to zero must be false. This is because it is impossible to traverse an infinite series.

### The Past Therefore Cannot be Infinite

The idea that the universe has an infinite past is just as problematic as the idea that I have just counted down from infinity. If the universe had an infinite past, then time would have had to count down from infinity to reach time zero, the present, and so would not have reached it. The fact that we have reached the present therefore shows that the past is not infinite but finite. The universe has a beginning. This claim, of course, has been confirmed by modern science, who trace the universe back to a point of origin in the ‘big bang’.

The past cannot go back forever, then; the universe must have a beginning. The next question is whether something caused this beginning, or whether the universe just popped into existence out of nothing. We all know, though, that nothing that begins to exist does so without a cause; nothing comes from nothing. For something to come into existence there must be something else that already exists that can bring it into existence.

The fact that the universe began to exist therefore implies that something brought it into existence, that the universe has a Creator.

### **The First Cause Must be Uncreated, Eternal**

If this Creator were a being like the universe, a being that exists in time and so that came into existence, then it too would have to have been created by something. Nothing comes from nothing, not even God.

This tells us that the ultimate cause of the universe must never have come into existence; the ultimate Creator must be a being that exists outside of time, an eternal being with neither beginning nor end. (For a more detailed defence of this argument, see William Lane Craig's *The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe*.)

### **What the First Cause Argument Proves**

There are several [objections to the first cause argument](#), but if it is successful then it establishes the existence of a Creator that transcends time. Combined with the [ontological argument](#), this would give us proof that there is a perfect, necessary, and eternal Creator.

This would not quite be the same as proving all that Christianity and the other monotheistic religions teach about God, but it would be close. It would tell us that God exists, and what he is like, and that he created the universe. It would not, however, tell us why he created the universe or what we ought to do about it.

The final two arguments speak more about God's purpose in Creation, and so at least hold out the hope of completing this picture. The first of these two arguments is the [argument from design](#).<sup>4</sup>

The universe had a beginning: it came in to existence: it is not infinitely old.

Uncontroversial for the Scientist: S.U.R.E.

•S = second law of thermodynamics which says broadly that the amount of usable energy in the universe is diminishing. Just like a battery powered flashlight that is left on. The flashlight could not have been on for an infinite period of time as it would have depleted long ago. In the same way the universe cannot be infinitely old (as the amount of useful energy would have gone).  
THEREFORE the universe is finite

•U = Universe is expanding. And not expanding in to empty space. Empty space is expanding too. Now imagine playing the video of the expansion backwards. Everything comes to a point, the size of a planet, then a soccer ball, then a pea then a point then nothing. Mathematically, time, space and matter came in to existence at that point. This is the Big Bang Theory.

•R = Radiation from the Big Bang. Penzias & Wilson got a Nobel prize for discovering (by accident) the afterglow radiation from the Big Bang explosion. Exactly the right wavelengths predicted by the theory many years before the discovery. Astronomer Robert Jastrow concluded that “No explanation other than the big bang has been found for the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last Doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and heat produced in a great explosion. Supporters of the steady state theory have tried desperately to find an alternative explanation, but they have failed.” God & the Astronomers - Jastrow

•E = Einstein’s theory of general relativity (verified to 5 decimal places!!) The theory predicts that time, space & matter cannot exist without each and that they had an origin.

These are only 4 of several strong scientific evidences for a creation event, bringing the universe out of nothing

If the universe came in to existence, it tells us something about the First Cause.

1. Something existed outside of (physical) space, time and matter before the creation event – i.e. is infinite, i.e. without space limitations, time limits or subject to the limitations of matter.
2. That something (or someone) is very, very, very powerful to create the whole universe out of nothing
3. The something had a will, is a person. The creation event happened when this agent (or person) chose to change the state of nothingness to the time-space-material universe (a ‘nothing-force’ does not have the ability to choose anything)
4. The person who caused the creation event must be supremely intelligent to be able to design the universe with such precision (see argument from design)

THIS SOUNDS LIKE A THEISTIC CREATOR GOD.... DEVELOPED FROM SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION OF THE UNIVERSE . . . general revelation about God's divine nature & eternal power or what!! Romans 1:18-twenty something

Every effect has a cause. The universe is an effect, therefore it has a cause

IN OTHER WORDS, A BIG BANG REQUIRES A BIG BANGER!!!

Atheists have to explain how something came out of nothing while remaining consistent with the definition of nothing. There cannot be pre-existent energy, or anything else before the Big Bang.<sup>6</sup>

4. The teleological (the design) argument is really a subcategory of the cosmological argument. It focuses on the evidence of harmony, order, and design in the universe, and argues that its design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose (the Greek word *telos* means “end” or “goal” or “purpose”). Since the universe appears to be designed with a purpose, there must be an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function this way.

## **The Argument from Design**

The argument from design focuses on the fact that the universe is fit for human habitation. There are many ways that the universe might have been, the argument from design tells us—it might have had different laws of physics; it might have had a different arrangement of planets and stars; it might have begun with a bigger or a smaller big bang—and the vast majority of these universes would not have allowed for the existence of life. We are very fortunate indeed to have a universe that does.

### **The Universe Might Have Been Other Than It Is**

Assume that modern science is correct in saying that the universe began with a big bang, that the universe came into existence with an explosion that sent pieces of matter flying in all directions at an enormous rate. The big bang might have been other than it was; it might have involved more or less matter, or have involved a larger or a smaller explosion, for example.

That the big bang occurred as it did was crucial for the development of life, because the rate of expansion of the universe, i.e. the speed at which the pieces of matter flew apart, had to fall within certain limits if life was to develop. Had the rate of expansion been too slow, then gravity would have pulled all of the matter back together again in a big crunch; there wouldn't have been enough time for life to emerge.

Had the rate of expansion been too fast, then gravity wouldn't have had a chance to pull any of the pieces of matter together, and planets, stars and even gases wouldn't have been able to form; there wouldn't have been anything for life to emerge on.

The rate of expansion following the big bang, of course, was just right to allow life to develop; if it weren't then we wouldn't be here now.

### **Had the Big Bang Been Different, the Universe Probably Wouldn't Contain Life**

That this was the case, though, was either an extraordinary fluke, or was intended by the big bang's Creator. Had the rate of expansion been even fractionally slower—one part in a million million—then the big bang would have been followed by a big crunch before life could have developed. Had the rate of expansion been even fractionally faster—one part in a million—then stars and planets could not have formed. It is highly unlikely that a random big bang would be such as to allow life to develop, and therefore highly unlikely, according to the argument from design, that the big bang from which our universe was formed happened at random.

The fact that the universe is fit for life requires explanation, and an appeal to chance is no explanation at all. It is far more likely that the universe was initiated by a being that intended to create a universe that could support life. The fine-tuning of the universe for life can only be explained with reference to a Creator, as the result of intelligent design.

### Other Examples of Fine-Tuning

The rate of the expansion of the universe following the big bang is just one instance of apparent design in the universe; other examples, like the strength of the weak force, the strength of the strong force, and isotropy, abound (for explanations and further examples see William Lane Craig's [The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle](#)).

Each example makes it less likely that the universe was created at random and more likely that it was designed by a Creator that takes an interest in humanity. Once all of this evidence is taken into account, the argument from design concludes, there can be no question as to whether the universe just happens to be fit for life or whether it was deliberately created that way; the universe clearly exhibits the marks of intelligent design.

### What the Argument from Design Proves

As with the other arguments, there are a number of [objections to the argument from design](#). If it is successful, however, then together with the [ontological argument](#) and the [first cause argument](#) it gives us proof that there is a perfect, necessary, and eternal Creator whose purpose in creating the universe was to bring about life. This would include most of the important elements of Christian theism; it would tell us that God exists, and what he is like, and that he created the universe with life in mind. It would not, however, tell us much about how we ought to respond.

The next argument, the [moral argument](#), seeks to do this by demonstrating God's authority and so showing that we ought to seek to live our lives in accordance with his plan.<sup>5</sup>

What about the encoded blueprint in every one of our cells, a blueprint for a far more clever machine. Encoded within the DNA double helix, our genetic code, there are tens of thousands of pages of information, enough to build a "you" out of chemicals.

In every instance of coded information that we know of, there is a mind behind that code. Whether it is chalk marks on Einstein's blackboard or the waggle dance of a returning worker bee, simple physical laws do not put the meaning in to the code. A mind does. Through chalk, Einstein can demonstrate the theory of relativity. Through the waggle dance, the returning worker bee can communicate the direction and distance to a food source to the rest of the hive.

Pure physical events do not explain the presence of coded information. That is why an explosion in an ink factory cannot pass on instructions by splattering ink on a surface. (The only information that the splattered ink reveals is a forensic retelling of the physical laws at work on that ink during the explosion). However an author using that same ink can pass on instructions for how to bake a cake or excise a malignant tumor. i.e. the mind embeds information into the ink distribution, more than just physical coordinates of ink marks, this ink is representative of other things and points to a mind at work.

If every code has a mind behind it, then surely there is a mind behind the genetic code too?

Just as the genetic code resembles other human codes, just as natural engineering resembles human engineering, we can say that natural artifacts resemble human artifacts

- Human Artifacts (like batteries and watches) are Products of Intelligent Design
- Nature (Our Universe and World) Resembles Human Artifacts
- Therefore, the Universe Is the Product of Intelligent Design
- But the Universe is Complex and Giant in Comparison to Human Artifacts
- Therefore, There is a Powerful and Vastly Intelligent Designer Who Created the Universe.                    A grand design needs a grand designer!

Because all of these arguments are based on facts about the creation that are indeed true facts, we may say that all of these proofs (when carefully constructed) are, in an objective sense , valid proofs. They are valid in that they correctly evaluate the evidence and correctly reason to a true conclusion— in fact, the universe does have God as its cause, and it does show evidence of purposeful design, and God does exist as a being greater than which nothing can be imagined, and God has given us a sense of right and wrong and a sense that his judgment is coming someday. The actual facts referred to in these proofs, therefore, are true, and in that sense the proofs are valid, even though not all people are persuaded by them.<sup>1</sup>

Not everyone is going to be persuaded by these arguments.

1. They may begin with false assumptions.
2. They may not reason correctly from the evidence.
3. They may believe the “general revelation” evidence, but not accept the “special revelation” information from the Bible.<sup>6</sup>

The value of these proofs, then, lies chiefly in overcoming some of the intellectual objections of unbelievers. They cannot bring unbelievers to saving faith, for that comes about through belief in the testimony of Scripture. But they can help overcome objections from unbelievers, and, for believers, they can provide further intellectual evidence for something they have already been persuaded of from their own inner sense of God and from the testimony of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusions:

The non-believer will benefit from all of the “General Revelation”, “Specific Revelation”, and “Philosophical Arguments” that they experience. But also they must yield to the leading and calling of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

*John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*

*John 16: 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

## Things to Mull:

1. When the seraphim around God’s throne cry out, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6: 3), do you think they are seeing the earth from a somewhat different perspective than ours? In what ways? How can we begin to see the world more from this perspective?
2. When is your inner sense of God’s existence strongest? Weakest? Why? In which of these situations are you in a condition more like the one you will have in heaven? In which of these types of situations are your judgments more reliable?
3. Look at your hand. Is it more or less complex than a wristwatch? Is it logical to think that either one of them just came about by an accidental combination of elements?
4. Do most people today believe in the existence of God? Has this been true throughout history? If they believe that God exists, why have they not worshiped him rightly?
5. Why do some people deny the existence of God? Does Romans 1: 18 suggest there is often a moral factor influencing their intellectual denial of God’s existence (cf. Ps. 14: 1–3)? What is the best way to approach someone who denies the existence of God?

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