

What Is This Document?

What follows is an admittedly haphazard collection of philosophical arguments for the existence of God; a tradition known as natural theology. Largely, these are (mostly unpolished) notes which have been used when presenting episodes of Philosophy Friday on [The Pat Flynn Show](#). Because of this, the presentation is sporadic: some arguments are merely outlines, others written out entirely. Perhaps as time goes on, the formatting will be tidied up, but access to this document is meant to support material taught in the podcast, rather than provide a standalone argument. Please enjoy.

Current Table of Contents

- 1) **What Is Natural Theology**
- 2) **The Argument from Change**
- 3) **The Argument From Conditioned Realities**
- 4) **The Moral Argument**
- 5) **BONUS: The Philosophical Approach to God on Live Radio**
- 6) **Argument 6: Coming Soon!**

What Is Natural Theology? A Brief Overview

Podcast Episode:

<https://www.chroniclesofstrength.com/philosophy-friday-what-is-natural-theology/>

From the orderliness of the universe to the irreducibility of human consciousness, arguments and evidence for the existence of God – or at least of transcendent intelligence – and the immateriality of the human soul have been offered since Pagan antiquity. The tradition of thinking about God and the transcendent -- of attempting to demonstrate not only God's existence, but God's nature; God's purposes; God's relationship to the world, etc – was eventually given a name: natural theology.

The project of natural theology must be distinguished from theology as rooted in religious presupposition, more commonly known as sacred theology. Simply put, natural theology starts from experience, not Scripture. It looks at the world and then reasons back to some ultimate cause or explanation of things. It takes no revelation as a starting point. It works through reason alone.

Anybody can engage in natural theology, whether religious or not, and (I would argue) everybody should. If anything is worth thinking about, surely it must be understanding (or at least *trying* to understand) the deep, down causes of things, to answer the fundamental question of, “How come anything?”

Natural theology, being a branch of metaphysics, studies being *qua* being, or being or existence *as such*. It is, in short, a philosophical system of designing -- better, *discovering* -- an accurate representation of reality. Because of this, most who engage in natural theology will tell you the project is arduous and conceptually difficult, but, if you stick with it, and study hard, many important truths can be revealed. Furthermore, natural theology can itself become a spiritual discipline, one used to obtain a proper, more thorough understanding of God’s existence, nature, and relationship to the world.

Practically speaking, natural theology can also help one to parse religious claims, for if something which can be known about God through reason contradicts with something purported to be revealed by God via some particular religion, we are now at an impasse. Either our reasoning is wrong, the religion is wrong, or someone has interpreted revelation poorly. Because of this, natural theology can cause us to question the integrity and comprehensive consistency of worldly religions. Perhaps it can even narrow the list of which religions (if any) might possibly be true.

More precisely, the method of natural theology is that of drawing distinctions and conceptual boundaries, and deducing conclusions from the consequences which follow. In other words, natural theology works primarily from philosophical first principles – principles that science itself must presuppose, such as the principle of sufficient reason, the law of non-contradiction, and so on – and, so long as the reasoning is valid within the steps of a particular argument, natural theology can offer a very strong and definitive knowledge of God. These first principles are such the denial of which leads to contradiction or absurdity, and so the task of the natural theologian is to reach the fundamental aspects of reality by riding these principles through to their logical end. It is important to emphasize, that, however this may be done by each individual, and whatever errors such individuals may commit along the way, natural theology stands (at least in principle) to not only give us real and important knowledge about the world, but a knowledge that is even more certain and secure than what science -- which offers probabilities, rather than deductive certainty -- can confer.

It is, however, equally important to acknowledge that metaphysics offers a qualitatively different type of knowledge than, say, chemistry or physics. One can know through natural theology that God exists and the human soul is immaterial, but natural theology will not tell a person how to build a bridge or excavate a tumor. Those tasks are left to the engineer and surgeon, respectively. Natural theology works through analysis by principle, physical science through analysis by elements. Both deliver real, practical information, and both are worth pursuing for their respective reasons. There is no conflict between them, nor could there ever be, since to

engage in science is first to accept, if only implicitly, the principles from which natural theology is arguing from.

Suggested Reading/Resources: [Introduction to Natural Theology](#) – Maurice Holloway; [Blackwell Companion of Natural Theology](#); [The Thomistic Institute Video Series on Metaphysics and St. Thomas Aquinas](#).

Argument 1: The Argument from Change (1st Way of St. Thomas Aquinas)

Primary Podcast Episode Link:

<https://www.chronicsofstrength.com/philosophy-friday-aquinas-god-and-the-argument-from-change/>

Bonus Episode Link:

<https://www.chronicsofstrength.com/philosophy-friday-teach-us-the-1st-proof-for-god-of-st-thomas-aquinas/>

- 1) Change is real.
 - a. Reasons believe this:
 - i. Common experience affirms this.
 - ii. To deny change presupposes change (even if only in your own mind).
 - iii. To deny change makes analyzing reality impossible – thereby undermining the possibility to deny change.
- 2) Change involves the actualization of a potential. (Principle of change)
 - a. Reasons to believe this:
 - i. Change can either be something coming from nothing (impossible).
 - ii. Or change can be something that already is and isn't (impossible).
 - iii. Therefore, change must involve the actualization of some inherent latency within the nature of some being.

(Substances have potentialities “built into” them, which are liable to be actualized. These potentialities are limited by the nature or essence of some being. For example: a horse can potentially make for a good stew but can’t meow like a cat.)

3) Only something already actual can actualize a potential; “whatever is changed is changed by another.” (Principle of causality)

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. The actualization of a potential can either be caused by nothing (impossible)...

ii. Or, the actualization of a potential can be caused by potential being (impossible; my potential knowledge of this argument cannot help you learn this argument, only my actual knowledge of this argument can. Also, something cannot be both potentially and actually in the same way.)

iii. Therefore, the actualization of a potential must be caused by something already actual.

4) This other actualizer must then be itself actualized (having its potency brought to act) by another or is something that is always and already actual (pure actuality itself). In other words, this other actualizer must have its ability to be actual in a derived sense (being actualized by another) or an underived sense (always and already actual).

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. If this actualized potential were not actualized by something already actual, then it would not be actual in the first place (it would have no proper or “per se” cause), since nothing can actualize its own potential. (Note: by proper cause we mean a power that is adequate to produce an effect, rather than an accidental cause, or something that happens to merely be along for the ride and is associated with, but not essential to, the proper cause. The nature of a fist – balled fingers, etc -- is the adequate “per se” cause of a person’s jaw breaking, but not the accidental property of a fist having the words “I pity the fool” tattooed on them.)

ii. Also, since “nothing” cannot actualize a potential, and since “potential” cannot actualize a potential, there must be something already actualize to actualize any potential.

iii. If A is actualized by B, and C is actualized by D, then A depends on B, C, and D, for its actualization. If this is the case, D must either be actualized by some further actuality (E, say) or D must be always and already actual (pure actuality itself; that is, no admixture of potential and actual being).

5) *The very existence* of any being going from potential to actual *here and now* entails the actualization of that being's potential for existence.

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. In order for any being which itself goes from potential to actual to produce an effect it first must have the potential for its existence actualized. In other words, the power to produce an effect presupposes the existence of the powered being. (Power meaning the ability to produce an effect – or in this case, change).

ii. For example: in order to cut a piece of wood with a saw (that is, to actualize the saw's potential for cutting), the saw must first have its potential existence actualized. Whatever other inherent powers a thing has are ultimately dependent upon the actualized potential of that thing's existence.

iii. The existence of any contingent being (things which exist, but might not have existed) depends simultaneously upon the fulfilment of prior conditions (in other words, the actualization of various potentials). For example: I (Pat Flynn) depend upon the simultaneous actualization of a particular cellular arrangement, which simultaneously depends upon the actualization of certain molecular structures, which simultaneously depends upon the actualization of electromagnetic fields, etc, etc, all *here and now*. If any of these potentials failed to be actualized, I would immediately go out of existence.

6) Therefore, there must either something the very being of which is already and always actual or there must be an infinite hierarchical series of actualized potentials (or actualized actualizers, caused causes, etc). But there cannot possibly be an infinite series of actualized actualizers.

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. Remember: thing A cannot do anything unless it is concurrently actualized (particularly in existence) by thing B, which cannot do anything unless it is concurrently actualized by thing C, etc, etc.

ii. If there were no termination to this series, then we'd always be 1+ actualization out from the entire series coming into existence. We'd never be able to achieve the actualization of thing A to begin with, since everything is running off borrowed existence with no primary, underived source. In other words, change would not be a real feature of the world – in fact, the existence of anything would not be a real feature of the world. Because if you suppress the first, underived proper cause, you suppress all subsequent derived causes. The dependency conditions are never satisfied, and thus nothing would have ever come to exist.

iii. But change is a real feature of the world, and so are existing things. Therefore, an infinite regress is impossible.

7) Therefore, there is a being the existence of which is already and always actual and cannot go from potentiality to actuality. In other words, something which has the power to power everything apart from itself but needs not be powered itself. (Analogy: think power strips versus an outlet. It doesn't matter how many power strips you have. Unless they're plugged into an outlet, they cannot power anything, including one another.)

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. It makes no sense to say the series terminates in something which goes from potential to actuality (in other words, something with derived actuality) since that simply means the series doesn't actually terminate, since that something must derive its actuality from another (this proposal is contradictory).

ii. It also makes no sense to say this unactualized actualizer has a potential part, for if that potential part could be actualized, then there must be something prior to it which is already actual. If it cannot be actualized, then it is not really a "potential" to begin with. It is nothing.

8) Having reached this conclusion, we can now begin to unpack further implications of what the existence of an unactualized actualizer must entail. For example:

9) Any being with a distinction between essence and existence cannot be an unactualized actualizer.

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. Essence: what a thing is. Existence: that a thing is.

ii. We can conceive of the essence of something (like a Pegasus, or a lion) without knowing whether that something exists. So, there is a real distinction between essence and existence.

iii. But anything whose essence is distinct from the act of existence, must have an act of existence added to its essence in order to be. In other words, it must have the potential for its existence actualized by something apart from itself. Therefore, this unactualized actualizer is that whose essence just is the very act of existence itself, requiring the actualization of no potential. (What it is, in other words, *just is* actuality, or subsistent existence, itself).

10) All finite, limited beings require the actualization of potentiality.

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. Any limited being (either in knowledge, power, value, height, weight, shape, size, spatial location, charge, etc) requires an outside actualizer since all limits admit of potentiality.

ii. For example: why a human being has actualized the height of 6'5 (has *this* limit) rather than 6'3 (opposed to *that* limit) simply means some particular potency has been actualized over another. Anything limited is therefore something comprised of potentiality and actuality.

iii. Anything comprised of potentiality cannot be an unactualized actualizer, since it is not actuality itself. Therefore, an unactualized actualizer must be inherently unlimited; in other words, infinite.

11) To be unlimited is to be absolutely simple and unique, since there are no intrinsic or extrinsic boundaries which could differentiate one unactualized actualizer from another.

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. To have more than one unactualized actualizer would entail some differentiating feature, such as a spatial location (or manifold), a particular charge, a certain height or weight or age, etc.

ii. But all these differentiating features are limits on being, which the unactualized actualizer must transcend.

iii. Therefore, there can be no more than one unactualized actualizer.

12) Furthermore, because all concrete, material/physical things are limited, either with respect to mass, shape, size, charge, height, spatial location, temporal duration, etc, an unactualized actualizer must be immaterial/trans-physical, since the actualization of all limits (potentials being actualized) cannot ultimately be actualized by something which is itself limited (that is, a further potential requiring actualization.) This follows straightforwardly from what has already been said.

13) So far: we have arrived at a perfectly simple and unique, immaterial, time-less, space-less, unactualized power that offers ongoing existence to everything in being apart from itself. This makes the unactualized actualizer the universal and ongoing cause of everything else that exists. This further entails omnipresence, since nothing else could ever exist apart from the ongoing causal influence of the unactualized actualizer.

14) This unactualized actualizer must exist necessarily, as well, since it never comes to be and can never pass away (in other words, nothing actualized its potential for existence, since there wasn't any to be actualized, and neither does it have any potential to go out of existence). Because this unactualized actualizer exists necessarily, it also exists eternally.

15) Furthermore, this unactualized actualizer is changeless, since change entails the actualization of potentiality, and there can be no actualization of potentiality in the unactualized actualizer. So, immutability follows.

16) Seeing how the unactualized actualizer is the ultimate source of all powers in the world, it is the literal power behind all powers and therefore omnipotent. (Since all being must ultimately trace back to the unactualized actualizer, this means the unactualized actualizer has the ability to communicate all being, which is another way to think of omnipotence.)

17) The unactualized actualizer is also perfect, since perfection entails no potentialities inherent to the nature of a thing being left unfulfilled. But whatever is perfect is also supremely good.

a. Reasons to believe this:

i. To say a triangle is a "good triangle" is to assess a particular instantiation of triangularity in relation to its essence (three straight sides whose angles add to 180 degrees, etc). What marks a good triangle differ from a bad triangle is how closely the potentialities toward perfection are fulfilled.

ii. Furthermore, no perfections could exist that don't ultimately find their source in pure actuality.

iii. Since the unactualized actualizer has no potentialities to be fulfilled, and is pure actuality itself, it is inherently

positive and absolutely perfect. There is nothing left wanting in pure actuality/subsistent being itself, and so this reality is supremely good.

iv. Side note: evil, on this account, is not something which exists, but is a privation where something that could or should exist, fails to exist. (For example, the undermining or ignoring of a human's capacity for love is a privation which could lead to the positive act of punching someone. Punching is not inherently bad, but when due to a lack of love, may lead to an inherently evil act. Thus evil, in the final analysis, is always a potential left unfulfilled.)

18) Since knowledge is a power inherent to the world, the unactualized actualizer is the ultimate source of all knowledge, as well. Making the unactualized actualizer omniscient. But omniscient can be inferred another way.

19) The essences/universal patterns/substantial forms (for example: triangularity, dogness, etc) of things are real features of the world, since instances of these forms (particular triangles, dogs, etc), are part of the created order. Therefore, these forms must pre-exist (in some way) in the unactualized actualizer since each of these particular instances are caused to be by the unactualized actualizer. This is true since whatever is in the effect must (in some way) be in the cause, since to deny this would imply something could come from nothing. But the unactualized actualizer cannot be identical to any one of these particular forms (that is, restricted in its essence) so the unactualized actualizer must be able to hold together all real and really possible forms without being identical to them. But this is what a mind does when it conceptually grasps the essences of things. Therefore, there is intellect in the unactualized actualizer.

20) Further, the perfection of intellect is the attainment of truth. The unactualized actualizer is perfect in all respects, include intellect. And so the unactualized actualizer must also be the source of all truth and knows everything about everything, including itself. Thus, omniscience follows.

21) To recap: we now have arrived at an unactualized actualizer that is the ongoing, necessarily existing and eternal cause of everything else that exists, which itself exists transcendentally of all restrictions, limits, and boundaries, is unlimited in power, goodness, and knowledge, and is absolutely simple and unique. What else can be said?

22) For one, something about freedom. Because this unactualized actualizer is necessarily perfect without having created anything, the fact the unactualized actualizer has created other things apart from itself entails something of a gratuitous act. In other words, a gift. Because of this, we can infer the unactualized actualizer is free in what it chooses to create or not create, since it has decided to created particular finite things to exist apart from itself (and presumably) not other particular finite things.

23) Lastly, something about love. Because this unactualized actualizer wills things apart from itself into existence, and toward the perfections of their inherent natures (accords toward become oak trees, humans toward the beatific vision), we can say the unactualized actualizer is loving, in that loving entails the willing of the good of another. On the most fundamental level, for any being to experience goodness, that being must first exist, and so by the very act of imparting existence to contingent beings, it can be said the unactualized actualizer is loving them in the most radical sense.

24) A final summary: If our reasoning has been correct, we have deduced the existence of an eternally and necessarily existing unactualized actualization at the foundation of all reality who's omniscient, omnipotent, and supremely good, beyond all finite restrictions and limits and change, possessed of intellect and will, and gratuitously conferring the act of existence to everything which exists apart from itself. But God is just all of those things.

25) Therefore, God exists.

Some objections considered:

If everything has a cause then what caused God? This is simply to ask what caused a necessarily existing and eternal being, which is meaningless. This objection completely misunderstands the premises of the argument, none of which implies that "everything must have a cause."

Why couldn't the prime moved be an admixture of potentiality/actuality? Already explained – is there a potential part? If so, there must be a deeper level of actuality to bring it about. If not, then it is not really potential.

Can something change itself, like living things? Something can't be both actually and potentially in the very same sense. For living things, one part of the organism moves another part. To contradict the premise, one would have to say something is and is not in the very same respect (that is, changer and changed), which is not the case with living things.

Does the law of inertia contradict the principle of change? The principle of inertia says a body will continue in rectilinear motion unless acted upon by a net external force. Even granted the validity of the principle of inertia, this in no way contravenes the metaphysical principle of whatever is changed is changed by another. For the principle of inertia only describes, and does not explain, the way a particular thing will operate, not what makes it the case. Further, the body is considered already in motion or at rest, and not as a body that begins to move or comes to a rest. The philosopher, on the other hand, wants to know why this body began to move in the first place, and is actually verified in a certain sense by the law of inertia, since any change in direction or speed requires an external force.

Quantum mechanics: Can't various quantum events happen indeterministically? Yes, but the principle of causality does not entail deterministic causation, so the objection is irrelevant.

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ARGUMENT 2:

The Argument from Conditioned Reality

Podcast Episode Link:

<https://www.chronicsofstrength.com/philosophy-friday-the-argument-from-conditioned-realities-bertrand-russel-god-of-the-gaps-and-more/>

Prefatory Note: This argument, which, we might say, is “in the spirit of St. Thomas” borrows ideas both from his famous 2nd and 3rd way, while offering a more contemporary metaphysical proof for the existence of God. The argument has three steps: First, to establish a self-sufficient, necessarily existing ground to reality. Two, to demonstrate that only an unlimited and perfect foundation could account for this. Third, to draw out various divine attributes from there.

Reality exists. But there could have been no reality – or at least there is no obvious contradiction when entertaining the idea. Instead of writing this paper, instead of drinking my coffee or having gone for my brisk morning walk, I might never have been. This entire planet might never have been and same with the universe. So far as we can tell, reality in total – whatever that happens to be -- might not have existed. Because of this, we are inclined to wonder: Why anything at all?

I will define *reality in total* as everything that exists and has ever existed. It is the collection of everything real (or that has been real). Now, maybe reality includes only our universe or maybe reality includes many -- possibly infinite -- universes and a whole host of angelic spirits, as well. Whatever reality is *specifically* is not essential to the consideration at hand, since whatever the details happen to be, they will always be everything that exists and has ever existed.

Step One: Establish the existence of at least one self-sufficient reality

Here is something else we can say about reality: It includes things that are conditioned in their existence. By this, I mean there are things that exist only because the requirements of their existence (however multifarious) have been fulfilled. Virtually everything we can think of would fall under the category of a conditioned existent. For example, humans. The only reason humans are part of reality is because, in one sense, something may have evolved into them,

but, in another sense, because of the simultaneous, and hierarchical, existence of other conditioned realities, such as the cellular activity of each and every human individual, the likes of which themselves depend upon further conditioned existents such as chemical bonding, the mass of the electron, electromagnetic fields, etc., but also the very planet we stand on and air we breathe. If any of these conditions were not fulfilled – whether looking back into the past of human origins, or simultaneously here and now – then humans would not exist.

So conditioned realities exist, and by conditioned reality we mean any reality whose existence depends upon the prior and/or simultaneous fulfillment of conditions in order to exist, or without which would fail to exist. Some people may prefer to use the word “caused reality” instead of “conditioned reality,” and that would be fine, because surely whatever else a cause is supposed to be, it would entail the fulfillment of conditions required to bring some other reality (or effect) about. But we’ll stick with the term “fulfillment of conditions” to be as broad as possible in our language and to accommodate the wide range of possible ways philosophers and scientists think about causes.

Now that we have that basic observation in place, we can ask a simple but provocative question about reality in total. Could reality *in total* – again, whatever that is – be *collectively* a conditioned reality? Could all of reality be comprised solely of conditioned realities, in other words? The answer to this question would seem most emphatically to be “No.” We can know this to be logically certain since if the totality of reality were *collectively* a conditioned reality, then reality *in total* would be awaiting the fulfillment of conditions beyond itself in order to exist. But there is nothing beyond the totality of reality, and so no such fulfillment of conditions could ever be satisfied. In this case, reality in total would be literally nothing – there would be no reality of any kind.

But obviously reality exists, because here we are. So, either we accept the absurdity that nothing exists (including ourselves) or we add something to the hypothesis about reality in total with respect to there being only conditioned realities. What does this force us to conclude? For one, that reality in total exists without a cause would suggest -- in fact, would conclusively demonstrate -- that reality in total is *somehow* self-sufficient, and, because of that, cannot be comprised solely of conditioned realities. In other words, there must be at least one unconditioned reality – that is, a reality existing through itself, which depends upon no fulfillment of conditions in order to exist – otherwise all of reality would be literally nothing.

In summary: *If there were not at least one unconditioned reality in the totality of reality, then the totality of reality would be collectively a conditioned reality. But if the totality of reality were collectively a conditioned reality, then all of reality would not exist. But all of reality does exist. Therefore, there is at least one unconditioned reality in all of reality.*

So reality is self-sufficient: There is nothing that could have caused reality to exist, since nothing could exist outside of reality to do the causing. This is a quite simple, logical consequence. Reality is already everything that exists or has existed. And what could possibly have caused everything that exists or has existed? The answer is nothing. Therefore, there is a self-sufficient foundation to reality in total.

There are, of course, a few ways a person could try to escape the conclusion, the most common of which would be to ask if an infinite series of conditioned realities could prevent the need of positing (at least one) unconditioned reality. But this simply will not work, and here's the reason. Every conditioned reality only and ultimately exists because it has effectively borrowed existence from some previously existing reality beyond itself. But this series cannot go on indefinitely, since there would be no ultimate, underived "power source" from which every conditioned reality ultimately derives being. In other words, if Thing A is dependent upon Thing B, and Thing B is dependent upon Thing C, etc., etc., and so on to infinity, then nothing would have ever come to exist in the first place, since the fulfillment of conditions to bring the entire series about is in principle unachievable, because we are always 1+ more "fulfillment of condition(s)" away from anything existing. To posit an infinite regress of conditioned realities is quite literally to say we have an "unachievable achievement of the conditions for existence", and that is a contradiction. So even if there were an infinite collection of conditioned realities, we would still need at least one unconditioned reality outside that entire collection to explain why it exists instead of nothing.

The second escape hatch a person might attempt to lunge through is to hypothesize a circular set of conditioned realities – such that Thing A fulfills the conditions of Thing B, which fulfills the conditions of Thing C, which in turn fulfills the conditions of Thing A, and around it goes forever. But neither will this scenario work, and for a similar reason. Within this circle of conditioned reality, there is either a terminating condition or an infinite series. If there is a terminating conditioning, then that terminating condition must be unconditioned (otherwise all reality would be nothing) – and in which case it would not depend upon anything beyond itself in order to exist, rendering the circle hypothesis moot -- or if it is an infinite series, then we are back to the entire series never coming to exist in the first place through the impossible existence of an ontologically dependent series which can never get itself started without something existing independent and self-sufficiently to bring it about, but now with the additional absurdity of one condition having to exist both prior and posterior to itself (for example: saying A only exists because B exists, but B only exists because A exists is like the *Terminator* movie, where John Connor is born only because he sent his dad from the future into the past to be with Sarah Connor, which is a philosophical plot hole, since he could never have existed in the first place to cause this event *without it having already occurred*, but it could only have already occurred if he existed in the future *before* he existed in the past, but that could

never have been the case without him first being born by causing himself to be born! Confusing? *Exactly*. The scenario is absurd.). *Another way to think about it: An infinite number of conditioned realities, whether arranged linearly, in a circle, or otherwise, is infinitely nothing without the existence of at least one unconditioned reality to explain it.*

With these two escape hatches now logically sealed, we are back to affirming the existence of at least one unconditioned reality to explain why reality in total is self-sufficient.

But how can any reality be self-sufficient or unconditioned?

Step Two: Show that nothing short of a perfect (read: limitless) foundation can account for a self-sufficient reality

The next step is to show this self-sufficient foundation must be perfect, since only a perfect foundation can explain the self-sufficiency of reality in total. By perfect we mean the self-sufficient foundation has no lacks, limits, boundaries, or restrictions of any kind. Or defects, for that matter.

We can demonstrate this conclusion in the following ways. First is from the effects we see in the world -- effects like reason, consciousness, and morality. Because whatever else the self-sufficient foundation of reality is, it must be able to ultimately fulfill the conditions for why anything else exists -- it is, in other words, the *fundamental and ongoing* cause for anything apart from itself; the final explanation to the question of "how come anything?"

In short, the unconditioned reality is the power behind all powers (power meaning the ability to produce an effect), which means this foundation is unlimited -- and because of that, perfect -- in power, since there's nothing that currently exists, or possibly could exist, that doesn't *ultimately* derive its existence from this unconditioned reality. But here's one other thing: Among the powers of the world is the ability to know, meaning this self-sufficient foundation must have the ability -- or something very much like the ability -- to know everything about everything, since it must have all possible powers of knowing. And so the foundation must be perfect in knowledge. But since knowledge is something that can only be possessed by a mind, the self-sufficient foundation must be therefore a mind (or mind-like).

Side Note: I also think we can see from our experience of consciousness that whatever else this self-sufficient foundation is, it must contain something akin to consciousness, as well, if only because we run into a categorical construction problem, if we propose the foundation to be purely material. Matter -- at least in the modern materialist sense -- is something that is disparate, undirected, and unaware. Consciousness, on the other hand -- or human consciousness, we should say -- is something that is unified, directed, and aware not only of the

external world, but its own internal reality, as well. Consciousness, in other words, is transparent to itself.

But if atheistic materialism (essentially the strongest form of atheism) were true, we'd have to imagine (given enough time and combinatorial configurations) we could affect a profound qualitative change merely through quantitative alterations. But that supposition is clearly a mistake, and here's why: No matter how many white blocks I have, and no matter how long I have to configure them, I am never going to be able to construct a purple tower. Unless I already have the proper materials on hand -- that is, a can of paint -- I will never be able change whiteness by rearranging whiteness. Same with getting consciousness from unconsciousness, or reason from non-reason, morality from amorality, etc. The problem is not one of simply hitting the right combination on a materialist padlock, however fantastically improbable that may be (and surely that is another difficulty for materialism, but one we can safely ignore for now) but of utterly lacking the qualitative categories necessary to bring about a particular effect, in this case, an inner, first-person sense of self. To suggest otherwise, especially when evaluating consciousness, is to say there could be an effect which is significantly greater than its cause (or sum of its causes), and that is to say that something can come from nothing, which is absurd. It is altogether a better explanation to see consciousness, reason, and morality as being part of the fundamental fabric -- or, as we're calling it, the ground -- of unconditioned reality. Indeed, this notion fits conspicuously well with the classical theistic conception of God as the ultimate and perfectly unified act of eternal understanding, one that knows and loves everything and wills existence to all things apart from himself.

Another way to see the self-sufficient foundation to reality must be perfect is by looking at limits themselves. A limit is anything that bounds the existence of something, whether ability, value, size, weight, shape, mass, or what have you. The word restriction could also be used. My water bottle, for example, has limits: It is limited in shape and volume and in what it can do. My water bottle can only hold a certain amount of water -- one liter, to be exact. But these limits have an explanation. The reason my water bottle can hold only one liter of liquid is because outside causes -- or, in other words, the fulfillment of various conditions -- made it such.

Perhaps there is a principle here. Perhaps anything comprised of limits stands in need of a cause (or fulfillment of conditions, whichever you prefer). This principle is evidently correct. Certainly it is true in our experience when we look to limited things. Explanations abound, and in cases where we have yet to discover them, we certainly expect them to be discoverable. But I think reason itself, and not just empirical verification, can reveal the universality of this principle. Whenever we conceive of something with limits -- whether human beings or mountain ranges or electrons -- we realize two things upon philosophical reflection: (One) Limits restrict what can be explained, and (Two) limits require an explanation.

For example, because a mountain range has a particular set of limits (size, shape, number of peaks, etc.), no mountain range can explain why amoebas exists. At least no mountain range *by itself* can explain why amoebas exists. The limits of “being a mountain range” excludes the possibility of being (with respect to the same place and time) “the type of thing which could explain the existence of amoebas.” We don’t have to run a scientific test to confirm this; this is clear by reason alone. Mountain ranges are limited in their *particular instance* of being, and because of this, cannot stand as the ultimate foundation of existence, since limits inherently block explanatory power, and whatever is the ultimately foundation of things, cannot be limited in explanatory power. It must be able to explain *everything*, including itself.

Perhaps a simpler example would be a square, since by having the limits of four equal, straight sides and 90 degree angles, a square cannot explain the existence of a circle, because the existence of a square (that is, the instantiation of a particular set of limits) excludes the existence of a circle (that is, the instantiation of another particular set of limits) with respect to the same thing, place, and time. So whenever a square comes to exist somewhere in material reality, there must be something which explains why those particular limits inhere (somebody drew them, perhaps), and, wherever those particular limits inhere, there can’t also be a circle *in the same respect*, since by drawing a square you are excluding the possibility of drawing a circle -- again, with respect to the same thing, place, and time. Therefore, limits both (one) exclude, and (two) require, explanations.

Allow me to reiterate. If something is limited in being, it may explain some things but not all things, and because of that, any limited being must have an explanation by something else. As a human being, I am limited to being a rational animal. My essential limits can (possibly) be used to explain (in part) why my children exist, but cannot (possibly) be used to explain why electrons exist. Similarly, the essential limits of “being an electron” (the possession of a negative charge) cannot explain the essential limits of “being a proton” (the possession of positive charge), and yet the essential limits of both electrons and protons require a deeper, outside explanation than either can internally provide.

Now here is the critical premise: If having a limit is itself a limit (true by definition), then whatever explains limits cannot itself be limited, since you cannot explain X (all limits) in terms of X (further limits). So, there must be something unlimited to explain the existence of any and all limits.

Here’s another way to think about this. We have already seen that the unconditioned reality must be able to fulfill the conditions of any real and really possible reality (since all realities ultimately derive their existence from this foundational source, and so would anything else that is possible be ultimately dependent upon the very same unconditioned reality). But if an

electron (a limited reality) were the unconditioned reality, then the existence of protons would not be possible, since electrons, by their very limits -- or, restricted act of existence, etc -- exclude protons. Limits block (some might say *limit*) explanatory power, and here we need something which can explain *all limits*. This something, then, must be inherently unlimited, unrestricted, and unbound.

But whatever is without limits is perfect, for whatever is less than perfect is limited in some respect (e.g., in value, power, or knowledge). A perfect ground of reality has no intrinsic or extrinsic boundaries of any kind -- no way of excluding other realities apart from itself. This would have to be the case, since if everything else that exists must ultimately derive existence from some unconditioned reality, that unconditioned reality must be compatible with this, that, and every particular, conditioned reality, otherwise this, that, or every particular, conditioned reality wouldn't exist. Or in other words, an unconditioned reality must be the ultimate plug-in port for all real and really possible realities. This too would entail an unconditioned reality is without limits, for if an unconditioned reality had limits that could exclude a possible reality, then such a possible reality is not really a possible reality, after all, since it could never, in principle, have come to exist (that is, have the conditions for its existence ultimately fulfilled).

In an attempt to summarize: Limits require an outside explanation, but an unconditioned reality can have no outside explanation. Therefore, an unconditioned reality is unlimited. Second, limits exclude one possible reality from another -- they differentiate, they restrict -- but any possible reality is only possible because it is compatible with an unconditioned reality in the sense that it can (even if only in theory) ultimately have the conditions of its existence fulfilled. So, an unconditioned reality must be compatible with all real and really possible realities -- that is to say, an unconditioned reality is without limits of any kind.

Step Three: Draw out the implications of this self-sufficient foundation to see this is very much what most people consider to be God.

We can now apply the concept of being limitless to the self-sufficient foundation of all reality. To be unlimited in power is to be omnipotent. To be unlimited in knowledge is to be omniscient. To be unlimited in goodness is to be morally supreme. Furthermore, being in space and time is another limit (restricted to being here vs. there, or existing sooner rather than later, etc.), and so is being comprised of matter (restricted by shape, size, mass, charge, etc.). By continuing to remove limits, we reveal a self-sufficient foundation that is timeless, spaceless, and immaterial. We remove all possible differentiating factors -- in other words, all possible restrictions on being (including smell), all possible internal and external boundaries (including charge) -- and so ultimately come upon the idea of unity, as well. By reason alone, we can see that whatever else this self-sufficient foundation is, it is one *and only one*. And this, as St. Thomas would say, we know to be God.

The entire argument can be summarized as follows: Reality in total cannot exist without a perfect foundation. Reality in total exists. There is a perfect foundation to reality in total.

Sources:

1. Introduction to Natural Theology – Maurice R Holloway
2. New Proofs for the Existence of God -- Fr. Robert Spitzer
3. The Soul's Upward Yearning – Fr. Robert Spitzer
4. 5 Proofs of the Existence of God – Dr. Edward Feser
5. The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics – Fr. Norris Clarke
6. Insight – Bernard Lonergan
7. How Reason Can Lead to God – Dr. Joshua Rasmussen

...

Argument 3: The Moral Argument for God

Podcast Episode Link:

<https://www.chroniclesofstrength.com/philosophy-friday-the-moral-argument-for-god/>

Among the basic features of human experience is our perception of the moral realm. We believe that some actions are better than others, and that there is value and goodness and meaning in the world. Even people who deny these obvious experiences cannot live consistently in their skepticism. As soon as they give an argument for the illusion of ethics – as philosopher Michael Ruse calls it – they are right back to their social media account, condemning the politics of their cultural opponents. In fact, the only reason a person would bother arguing for moral nihilism in the first place, is because they perceive there is *value* in truth, and so, such arguments are worth making, even if truth is disturbing. But if their arguments were correct, why bother making them at all? Thus, virtually any argument set to undermine the objectivity of the moral realm seems first to implicitly assume it.

Moral experience is often perceived in two distinct categories. On the one hand, a perception of moral value – of things being either good or bad, or possibly indifferent; on the other hand, a perception of moral obligation or duty – that we ought to act one way instead of another, at least in certain situations. St. Thomas Aquinas, in fact, argues this as the first principle of the natural law: To do good and avoid evil. Now, most everyone would agree that this at least appears to be the case, that it very much jives with

our intuition and experience, and that, even if we do not always agree on what is good, we certainly all agree that goodness is to be sought for its own sake and evil deeds avoided.

So, we all perceive morality as being a real feature of the world, and because of that, we call morality objective. We believe there really are better or worse behaviors, and it really does make sense to call some things good and others bad.

Contrast this with the opposite position, which says that morality is entirely subjective, that is, a figment and invention of the human mind, and something which is neither a valid nor binding feature of the world. This, of course, is the typical atheist (and especially naturalist) view of how to explain – or really, explain away – the moral realm. Alex Rosenberg states the eliminativist-nihilistic position as such: *“Nihilism rejects the distinction between acts that are morally permitted, morally forbidden, and morally required. Nihilism tells us not that we can’t know which moral judgments are right, but that they are all wrong. More exactly, it claims, they are all based on false, groundless presuppositions...”*

Moreover, nihilism denies that there is really any such thing as intrinsic moral value. People think that there are things that are intrinsically valuable, not just as a means to something else: human life or the ecology of the planet or the master race or elevated states of consciousness, for example. But nothing can have that sort of intrinsic value – the very kind of value morality requires. Nihilism denies that there is anything at all that is good in itself or, for that matter, bad in itself. Therefore, nihilism can’t be accused of advocating the moral goodness of, say, political violence or anything else.”

Did you get that? There is, according to Rosenberg, no moral difference to be discerned between feeding the hungry and raping children. Just so we’re clear.

But is Rosenberg correct? Do we have any good reason to deny the objectivity of morality? My contention is we currently have no good reason whatsoever to doubt our moral experience and, furthermore, that the existence of God provides a perfectly sound foundation for the objectivity of moral values and duties in His very nature. We can state the argument as follows: If morality is a real feature of the world, then God exists. Morality is a real feature of the world. Therefore, God exists.

In support of the first premise, we can turn initially to the various reasons why certain philosophers (and scientists) such as Rosenberg, have come to deny that morality is a real feature of the world, and see how each of them fails utterly to undermine our basic moral beliefs.

The first would be that morality is not something that can be discovered by the scientific enterprise, and the implications therein. This would seem to be the view many naturalists assume – that is, an implicit assumption of scientism, or the idea that if something cannot be empirically validated, then it must not actually exist.

I hesitate to repeat a quotation, but Yuval Harari offers a paradigmatic case of scientistic thinking when he says, “Human rights, just like God and heaven, are just a story that we’ve invented. They are not an

objective reality; they are not some biological effect about Homo sapiens. Take a human being, cut him open, look inside, you will find the heart, the kidneys, neurons, hormones, DNA, but you won't find any rights. The only place you find rights are in the stories that we have invented and spread around over the last few centuries. They may be very positive stories, very good stories, but they're still just fictional stories that we've invented."

The problem with scientism -- as we have seen -- is that it is either self-defeating or uninteresting. If a person is really going to say that only that which the scientific method can effectively observe, quantify, etc., is real, they will have immediately failed to meet the very standard which they are attempting to impose upon everything else, since the statement "only believe what can be scientifically proven," cannot itself be scientifically proven. Further, science simply assumes other, more basic areas of knowledge, such as logic, mathematics, and, ironically enough, the objectivity of moral values and obligations as such. Scientists, for example, assume it is better to report truth, rather than lies -- but this is an assumption going into science, so how could we expect this to be something science confirms? (Of course, a person might say the only reason they assume it is better to be honest, is because being honest begets more reliable results, but that itself assumes that more reliable results are better than less reliable results, etc. Probe around long enough, and you will always find an objective moral assumption somewhere with respect to science.)

Scientism is obviously false, and so long as we have reasons to believe there are other genuine ways of understanding reality apart from the hypothetico-deductive method, then there is no reason to assume morality is not a real feature on the world, simply because moral values or duties cannot be observed under a microscope -- since neither can consciousness be, or mathematics or logic. To suggest otherwise is to commit a crude philosophical mistake and has nothing to do with the outcomes of the scientific enterprise itself. So, the argument from scientism fails.

Another objection is that evolution can explain why we have the moral experiences we do. While it remains highly dubious that evolutionary biology can effectively determine how humans came into their specific moral beliefs, we can grant this entire speculation and still see this would do nothing to undermine our belief in the objectivity of morality as such, for the simple reason that evolution cannot tell us one way or another whether we have evolved to discover something, or invent something. In fact, we assume evolution has already given us mostly reliable faculties and beliefs -- that is, faculties and beliefs we've used to gather data and make inferences to establish the very theory of evolution itself. In other words, that we've evolved to discover objective reality. So, why assume evolution hasn't also conferred equally reliable faculties with respect to the moral realm? To affirm the reliability of our other faculties-- everything from eyesight to human reason -- but then deny the reliability of our moral sense seems arbitrary and question begging. The point is evolutionary theory, whatever the details happen to be, could no more undermine our belief in objective morality than it could our belief in the validity of logical inference making. So, the evolutionary argument also fails -- or if it succeeded, it would prove too much, and devastate the entire enterprise of rational investigation.

The final objection with respect to objective morality has to do with the quite obvious fact that people -- and various cultures and epochs -- often have significant moral disagreements. And certainly, this is true.

But just because there are disagreements about the moral facts of the matter, does not mean there are no moral facts to be discerned. To say our moral faculty is generally reliable is not to say it is utterly infallible, or that we might not have made a moral mistake, just as we make mistakes in reaching conclusions apart from moral decision making. For example: if the holocaust was objectively wrong, then any country which participated in the holocaust was *objectively wrong*, even if they believed themselves to be right. That is not a problem for the objectivity of morality – that is, of the ontological status of moral values and duties as such – but a question of moral epistemology, or of how we come to know what is good from bad, right from wrong, etc. And that is an interesting question, to be sure, but not sufficient to undercut our basic and intuitive assumption that a correct answer exists to what right behavior in certain situations is, even if that answer is difficult to come by. Further, to suggest there are no moral facts of the matter is to make all moral progress impossible. If disagreements undermine objective morality, then the Nazis were not really wrong in anything they did, just different. Some people like blueberry yogurt, and other people prefer raspberry. No big deal. But obviously no person who is not also a college professor thinks morality is of the same ontological category as preferences in flavors of yogurt.

Here is my proposal. To deny the objectivity of the moral realm is to make life meaningless and absurd. It is to say there is no real and actual difference between people who feed the hungry and people who rape their own offspring. Nobody is comfortable with that who isn't already in an asylum, or who doesn't belong there. Further, life as such would no have inherent purpose, value, or significance. These are an inordinately high price to pay. So, the question is, should we pay it? Are there any overwhelmingly (or even moderately) good philosophical or scientific reasons to hold such a ghoulish and despondent view of reality – a perspective of the world which would swiftly eradicate our entire, philosophical basis for criminal and social justice, the love we feel within interpersonal relationships, and that life itself is actually, somehow good? The answer, if we've succeeded in overcoming the aforementioned objections, is no – not even close. And unless somebody can give us every good reason to pay such an existentially high price tag, then we are well within our rational rights to refuse the offer and turn away from the deal. We don't – and shouldn't – buy what the metaphysical naturalist is selling. We should hold to our basic beliefs, since it is utterly reasonable to do so absent solid defeaters of them. And just as we have no good reason to deny the reality of the external world -- that physical objects like people and platypi exist, less someone can convince us otherwise -- nor do we have any good reason to deny our own, internal conscience. It is a basic belief, the objectivity of the moral realm, and one we are perfectly justified in assuming until some good, non-question begging argument is provided against it.

After all, the reason the materialist atheist denies the objectivity of morality is, for the most part, because the atheist believes that only physical things exist, and since morality is not something that can be reduced to either physics or chemistry, morality must therefore be a fabrication of the human mind. But that assumes atheism, whereas if God exists – that is, an unconditioned foundation to reality which provides the very center of moral oughtness – then we already have an objective reference point from which every moral assessment is ultimately borne against.

The traditional view is that God is unlimited being, whose essence just is the plentitude of existence as such, or, if you prefer, the unconditioned reality providing the ultimate, complete and correct set of

answers to the question of “How come anything?” And if arguments from natural theology have any probative significance (certainly, I think so), then we already have logical, good reasons to believe in the existence of a necessary being which is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally supreme. And just as the concept of triangularity as such is required to make any individual assessment of whether this or that particular triangle has been drawn well or poorly – so too do we need some idea of goodness as such, to determine whenever there is a hole where goodness ought to have been (but isn’t), which is how many thinkers of a previous age considered evil; that is, not as something existing in itself, but something missing from existence that could, or should, have been – such as, in the human case, our ignoring or undermining our natural capacity for love.

God, then, makes sense not only of our moral experience, but provides the essential authority behind our perception of the natural, moral law. And since no law can be intelligible apart from a law giver, having a concrete, morally perfect intelligence standing ontologically behind our innate perception of the moral realm, offering the binding and obligatory force to follow through on what our consciences tell us – to do good and avoid evil – while also, as needed, offering specifics about good and just behavior through instances of divine revelation to offset whatever confusion has set in because of original sin.

In conclusion, if God – that is, transcendent and perfect intelligence – is the best if not only plausible foundation to support the existence of objective moral values and obligations, and if objective moral values and obligations are objective, then (very probably) God exists. So just as we arrive at the existence of God by philosophically examining the external world – from either order and intelligibility, or contingency, etc. – so can we affirm God’s existence by reflecting upon internal experience, as well; the reality of our moral sense, the inner secrets revealed through human conscience – or in the words of Pope Leo, found echoed in the Catholic Catechism: *The natural law is written and engraved in the soul of each and every man, because it is human reason ordaining him to do good and forbidding him to sin . . . But this command of human reason would not have the force of law if it were not the voice and interpreter of a higher reason to which our spirit and our freedom must be submitted.*

...

Some additional objections considered

Objection: Is something good because God commands it, or does God command something because it is good?

Response: Neither. In classical theism, God stands in place of what Plato called The Good, such that it is God’s very nature to be essentially loving, just, merciful, etc. Therefore, God is not under some external, moral standard; God simply is the transcendent moral standard himself. In short, moral values are grounded in God’s essentially all-good nature, and moral commands in God’s will, which inherently reflect his supreme perfection.

...

Objection: OK, but this doesn’t prove that Christianity is true.

Response: Granted. But it does prove that atheism is false, and for that we can be much relieved. Plus, while additional argument must be made for Christianity specifically, the moral argument is certainly compatible with Christianity, but not with other religions. So, it narrows the theological hunt, and, if nothing else, points to Christianity being possibly true. That is not insignificant.

...

Objection: This argument doesn't "prove" objective morality.

Response: Again, granted. But it does make clear that we have no good reason to deny it, along with what would follow if we did. And so long as a person feels that, absent some good reason otherwise, we should hold firm to those most basic, direct, and intuitive aspects of experience, then we are perfectly justified in doing so with respect to the moral realm. Now, since fewer things could seem more obviously true via direct experience than the inherent wrongness of raping and murdering an innocent child, and since no argument against that would be as obvious or convincing as the moral experience itself, our affirmation in objective morality is quite secure. In short: so long as you affirm that at least something – whatever that may be: rape, murder, racism, the holocaust, etc – is objectively wrong, regardless of what any person, or society at large, may think about it, the argument is off and running.

...

Objection: Couldn't Moral Platonism offer a viable alternative to God?

Response. Not hardly. First, there is a severe lack of explanatory power of how, as humans, we could come to know of – let alone, evolve into -- moral values existing purely in the abstract, and why such abstractly existing values such as "prudence" or "love" fortuitously happen to match up to whatever behaviors they do. The position seems fundamentally unintelligible, whereas God, being a concrete reality, offers adequate explanatory grounds, since God is a being with intellect and will. Also, abstract objects qua abstract objects bear no causal relations to things, and thus, people would hold no obligation to adhere to moral values existing abstractly – that just wouldn't make sense.

...

Objection: People have said the natural law is inviolable, but clearly this isn't true. People do bad things all the time.

Response: When philosophers and theologians say the natural law is inviolable, they don't mean physically inviolable. They mean morally inviolable. Here's the distinction. If a person breaks the natural moral law – or, directly, one of God's commands – they incur moral guilt. This shifts the disposition of their soul and tilts them away from God; that is, it frustrates their own eternal fulfillment. The moral law, we must remember, isn't something God lays down to just stop people from having a good time, but rather, is meant to lead souls to heaven. It is a blueprint for living well and being fulfilled. To then go against the moral law – which humans are certainly free to do – is to act irrationally against one's own best interests. Thus, one cannot violate the natural law without moral, spiritual penalty.

...

Objection: My friend Richard is an atheist and he is a perfectly good person. We don't need religion to be nice to people.

Response: That was never the contention. In fact, Christianity holds that the natural moral law has been written on our hearts – that God gave us a moral sense. Therefore, most people, even if they don't attend church or believe in God, can see it is clearly wrong to murder innocents, rape children, abuse puppies, etc. That said, religion is a virtue, and if God exists, then we owe more to God than we could ever repay. So, while a person can be "good" in some respects without God, they cannot be completely good – that is, perfected in their essential nature -- since they are withholding a just relationship to God in not offering due reverence, worship, etc.

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Further Resources/Reading

- Mere Christianity by C.S Lewis
- Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology

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BONUS: The Philosophical Approach to God (on live radio)

Notes: Recently I (Pat) went on Gary Michuta's radio show to offer a philosophical approach to God. Below are the notes/outline of the argument I presented.

EPISODE LINK:

The Catholic Catechism (paragraph 31) asserts that humans can arrive at a basic knowledge of God through a series of "converging and convincing arguments", sometimes called philosophical proofs. The first of these philosophical approaches is from the world, or the order, contingency, and becoming of things outside of us, but also including us. The second approach is from within, by dwelling upon the moral law given to each human person, and our innate longings for the infinite and for happiness found only in God.

"The world, and man, attest that they contain within themselves neither their first principle nor their final end, but rather that they participate in Being itself, which alone is without origin or end.

The Philosophical Approach to God

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Terms:

Conditioned reality – Any reality that is dependent upon another reality for its existence and therefore requires the “fulfillment of conditions” for its existence. For example: A cat exists only because its parents procreated, but also because of the concurrent existence of the cat’s cells, the earth’s atmosphere, electromagnetic fields, etc.

Unconditioned reality – Any reality that is independent of any other reality for its existence; it requires the fulfillment of no prior conditions for its existence.

...

Stage 1 of the argument: From the Conditioned to the Unconditioned.

Conditioned realities exist. Certain things come to be and pass away. These things – call them conditioned or contingent realities, or caused causes – are existentially dependent upon other realities, both past and present.

A conditioned reality (like a cat, amoeba, or electron) is any reality in which a prior set of conditions must attain for that reality to exist and to continue to exist. But not all of reality could be a conditioned reality, because if that were the case, then reality in total (whatever that is) would be awaiting on the fulfillment of conditions outside of itself in order to exist. But there is nothing outside of reality in total which could fulfill these conditions. Therefore, if all of reality were collectively a conditioned reality, then all of reality would not exist. It would be literally zero. Nada.

You cannot have an infinite series of conditioned realities, since no conditioned reality could ever come to exist unless certain conditions had been fulfilled. But to posit an infinite series of conditioned realities is to delay the ultimate fulfillment for conditions indefinitely, such that no series could ever come into existence. Suppress the fundamental “primary cause”, and you suppress the entire series, because you always remain 1+ more conditioned out from anything coming to exist. By positing an infinite series of conditioned realities, you have proposed an “unachievable achievement” of the fulfillment of conditions, and that is a contradiction.

So, there must be at least one unconditioned reality in all of reality to explain why reality is; an independent foundation or existential “plug in port” from which all conditioned realities ultimately derive their existence. To deny the existence of at least one unconditioned reality either commits one to a fundamental contradiction (saying there is an existing conditioned reality whose conditioned for existence have not been fulfilled; in other words, there is a caused reality without a cause) or the absurd position that nothing exists.

Conclusion: There is at least one unconditioned reality in the totality of reality.

...

Stage 2 of the argument: From the Finite to the Infinite.

Finite realities exist. Some may call these existing essences, or something which exists but only in a particular, limited way – only this much, or to this degree or intensity, etc. For example: a cat, an amoeba, an electron, or whatever. A cat exists, for example, but only in a “cat-mode” of existing – it purrs, it meows, it scratches things, etc -- which is distinct from an electron or an amoeba. Finite realities are comprised of limits; they're restricted in being. They do not have the full plenitude of existence as such.

But reality cannot be self-sufficient unless there is at least one unlimited, qualitatively perfect, and infinite source of Being to serve as the unconditioned reality which ultimately fulfills the conditions for everything else in existence aside itself.

There are at least three reasons for this.

1) To exist in one particular way (that is, to have a limiting essence) is to not exist in another particular way. To exist as a cat is not also to exist as a dog. Something cannot exist as a cat and not a cat at the same time; that is a contradiction. So, limits or essences exclude the possibility of one reality from another. However, the unconditioned reality must be able to ground and fulfill the conditions for all real and really possibility realities, and so cannot be incompatible with them. It must, therefore, be free of any/all limits and/or restrictions on being which could exclude any real or really possible reality from it. For example: if an electron (a limited reality) were the unconditioned reality, then the existence of protons would not be possible, since electrons, by their very limits -- or, restricted act of existence, etc -- exclude protons. Limits block (some might say *limit*) explanatory power, and here we need something which can explain all limits. This something, then, must be free of any/all essential limits.

2) To exist in a particular way (to have a cat-like essence, or amoeba-like essence) is to be determined to exist in that way by something beyond itself; and to lack the sufficient or adequate explanation for its existence. Limits not only block explanatory power, as mentioned previously, but require explanations for why they inhere; for why this individuated act of existence was determined to exist this way, rather than that. So, all limits stand in need of an outside explanation. But to have a limit is itself a limit (true by definition) and we can't explain the existence of all limits by invoking further limits. Therefore, we can only explain the existence of limits by the existence of something without limits.

As Fr. Clarke puts it, “No finite being can be self-sufficient. Why? Let us suppose it were finite. This means it would be one determinate, limited mode of being (limited in qualitative intensity of perfection) among at least several other modes possible, such that at least one higher mode were possible. Otherwise, it would not be finite or limited. Now there must be some sufficient reason why the being in question exists in this limited, determinate mode of being and not in some other possible. Why this being, or this whole finite world-system, in fact, and not some other? A principle of selection is needed to select this mode of being from a wider range of possibility and give actual existence to it according to this limited mode or essence. But no finite being can do this selection of its own essential mode of being and confer existence on itself in this mode. For then it would have the impossible task of preexisting its own determinate actual existence in this mode, picking out what it wills to be before it actually exists, and then conferring actual existence on itself in this mode. All of this is obviously absurd, unintelligible. It follows that no determinate finite being can be the self-sufficient reason for its actual existence as this particular finite being. Therefore it requires an independent efficient cause or source of being to determine it to exist as this finite mode of being. But since no finite cause can ever be self-sufficient, we must eventually come to some infinite cause or ultimate source of all finite these finite beings.” (The One and the Many, pg. 220.)

3) Thought experiment on the relationship between essence and existence: Perhaps existence is a “minimum” and we add things to existence (such as essences) to get the world of our experience. But this cannot be. You can’t add something to existence, because apart from existence there is nothing to add! Therefore, existence cannot be a minimum; it must, rather, be an all-enveloping maximum, from which anything limited mode of existence is really a restriction on being, or a subtraction from the plentitude of being itself.

Stage 3: From the Many to the One

Once we’ve arrived at an unlimited, qualitatively perfect and infinite source of Being, we can quickly deduce there to be only one such Being, since if there were two or more, we’d need some way of differentiating them – in other words, one would have to lack something which the other had and would therefore not be the perfect, unlimited source of Being. So, there is one – and only one – perfect and unlimited Being in and through which all limiting essences participate. And that we know to be God.

Summary:

- 1) There are beings conditioned in their existence; dependent upon other beings for their inclusion into reality. Necessary conditions, in other words, must be fulfilled for conditioned realities to exist.
- 2) But not all things in reality can be conditioned in their existence, because no matter how long the chain of “the fulfilment of conditions” continued (whether finite or infinite) the entire series could never have come to exist unless it terminated in something whose existence is unconditioned and therefore self-sufficient, whether that something is part of the chain, or beyond the chain entirely. So, there must be at least one unconditioned (self-sufficient) reality to ultimately fulfill the conditions of any contingent, conditioned reality, otherwise nothing would have come to exist.
- 3) Because no finite, limited being can be self-sufficient, the unconditioned, self-sufficient reality must be unlimited and qualitative perfect.
- 4) There can be one and only one qualitatively perfect, self-sufficient Being.

...

Argument 6: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysical Argument

(Note: This is a similar approach to the argument above, but arrives at the same conclusion from a slightly different approach and so can offer a deeper understanding of the underlying metaphysics.)

The proceeding is a metaphysical demonstration for the existence of one (and only one) unconditioned and all-powerful, qualitatively perfect act of existence existing through itself — in other words, a logical proof for the existence of God.

The argument is broken into the following stages:

- Proof of (at least one) uncaused cause in “the totality of reality.”
- Proof the uncaused cause must be pure existence itself.
- Proof the uncaused cause must be unlimited (and therefore unrestricted and qualitatively perfect) in being.
- Proof there can be one (and only one) qualitatively perfect being.
- Proof this one (and only one) qualitatively perfect being is the ultimate and continual creator of everything else in existence. In other words, that God is “keeping things real.”

Stage 1 - Proof of (at least one) uncaused cause in all of reality.

Definitions:

Caused/conditioned reality — *anything which exists only because certain, necessary conditions were fulfilled which actualize it. Also can be referred to as a “conditioned reality.” For example: a cat, which exists only because the cat’s (let’s call him Felix) parents procreated, but also because of the concurrent existence of electrons, the earth’s atmosphere, etc. Some conditions for the feline’s existence are temporal (looking back in time) whereas others are concurrent or simultaneous; that is, some causes are “here and now” keeping the caused reality (in this case, a cat) in existence.*

Uncaused/unconditioned reality — *anything which exists by a power intrinsic to itself; which relies upon no external cause or prior set of conditions to exist.*

The Question: Could anything have caused “the totality of reality” (that is, everything which exists or has existed)? Alternatively, we could ask: *Could all of reality have been caused?*

The Answer:

From experience we know there are many finite, limited modes of existence. In other words, certain things (beings, items, etc) exist but only insofar as various conditions were fulfilled which caused them. These beings we call **caused or conditioned realities** (also conditioned existents, conditioned beings, etc), since they exist – and only can exist – when certain fundamental requirements are fulfilled. There are conditions which must be ontologically satisfied for *potential* beings (or states of being) to *actually* exist.

Definition: A finite being is any existing thing which is restricted in what it can do, what it can know, how it acts, where or when it resides, etc. In other words, it is a being comprised of an essential set of limits.

For example: a cat. Felix (if we can call him that) exists only because of the fulfillment of prior conditioned states, such as the act of procreation on his parents’ part, but also because of the

concurrent existence of the earth's atmosphere, the existence of electromagnetic fields, and so on. Felix exists only because prior, foundational conditions were fulfilled which caused him – and concurrently cause him – to be. Had any of these conditions not been fulfilled, Felix would never have come into existence and/or would suddenly cease existing.

Understand that only some of the conditions for Felix's existence are temporal, or looking back in time. Meaning, only some of the conditions tell us what *brought* Felix into existence, whereas other conditions explain what *keeps* Felix in existence. Since for Felix to exist *here and now*, there must also exist, concurrently, the Strong Nuclear Force, for example. If suddenly the Strong Nuclear Force were expunged from reality then Felix would also be expunged from reality. Goodbye cat.

In summary, when encountering the many finite, limited beings around us, we recognize they are not self-sufficient in their existence. Something beyond their limited, finite mode of existence explains them.

OK, so. Once we have grasped the notion "conditioned existent" we can then proceed to ask, "Could everything in reality be conditioned in its existence?" To which the only appropriate response is, "No," since to say "all of reality" (whatever that is) is comprised *only* of conditioned existents is tantamount to saying "all of reality" is dependent upon something beyond itself, which is absurd. Because there is nothing beyond "all of reality" which could fulfill the conditions for "all of reality" to exist. (Reality being the collection of everything that is or once was.)

In other words, to suggest "all of reality" is *collectively* a conditioned reality is literally to say "all of reality" would be awaiting the fulfilment of conditions beyond itself to exist. But since the fulfilment of those conditions could never possibly be met, reality itself (on the presupposition that everything is conditioned in its existence) could never exist -- literally, there would be nothing.

We can restate the puzzle as follows. Experience reveals many finite, limited, and conditioned modes of existence – things which exist, but do not have to exist, and exist only insofar as the conditions for their existence have been fulfilled. But not "all of reality" could be like this, since there are no possible conditions beyond "reality itself" upon which "reality itself" could depend.

Once more, to say that "all of reality" or "the totality of reality" or simply "reality itself" is *collectively* a conditioned reality is tantamount to the assertion that "all of reality" is awaiting the fulfilment of conditions beyond itself to exist: conditions which could *never* be fulfilled because no such conditions exist (or could possibly exist). Therefore, reality in total could not possibly exist if everything were (collectively) conditioned in its existence.

We can also instigate the question by asking, "Could anything have caused reality?" The answer, again, is, "No, of course not." Nothing could have caused reality because nothing could exist beyond "everything that is or once was" to do the causing.

So reality is self-sufficient. Not everything has – or could have – a cause. Because the very moment we assume everything has a cause we are forced to conclude that nothing -- not even a single particle -- exists, which is massively contrary to fact and cannot be honestly entertained. Because of this, not *everything* has a cause, or possibly *could* have a cause. Perhaps (as it seems) most things have a cause, but there must be at least something – and perhaps only one something – without a cause.

This next step is important: Reality can only be self-sufficient (which it is) if reality is *not* comprised *solely* of conditioned existents. In other words, there must be at least one unconditioned reality in the totality of reality; at least one reality that does not depend upon the fulfilment of any conditions external to itself. That exists in virtue of the kind of thing it is; by a power inherent to its nature.

Our first conclusion can be summarized as follows: *If there were not at least one unconditioned reality in the totality of reality, then the totality of reality would be comprised of only conditioned realities. But if the totality of reality were comprised of only conditioned realities, then the totality of reality would not exist, since reality in total would be dependent upon the fulfilment of an unfillable (read: non-existent) set of conditions. But reality does exist. Therefore, there is at least one unconditioned reality in the totality of reality.*

In simpler terms, if all of reality needed a cause, then all of reality would not exist, since nothing could be that cause. Therefore, there is at least one uncaused reality in all of reality to explain why any caused or contingent reality exists.

Objection: Couldn't there be an infinite series of caused causes? Could that provide a possible alternative to an uncaused, necessary reality?

Response: To say something exists because of an infinite series of caused causes (or conditioned realities) is tantamount to saying that an unachievable fulfillment of conditions has been achievement, which is absurd.

For example, if thing A exists only because certain conditions were fulfilled, but those conditions have been fulfilled by another set of (ontologically prior) conditions being fulfilled, and if we're always 1+ more set of "fulfilled conditions" out, then no set of conditions could ever be ultimately fulfilled. Therefore, nothing would have (or possibly could) come to exist if there were an infinite regress of caused causes, since by suppressing the primary cause, all subsequent causes are inevitably suppressed, as well. But things **have** come to exist. So there cannot be an infinite regress of caused causes.

To put it another way, if thing A is caused by thing B, and thing B is caused by thing C, etc, etc, ad infinitum, then thing A would never come to exist unless there is also the existence of a metaphysically necessary being which terminates (or stands outside) the regress of causes. Otherwise, we are always "1+ more fulfilled set of conditions or cause out" from thing A coming

into existence; in other words, the conditions for thing A's existence could never be ultimately fulfilled by an infinite series of causes alone. Therefore, the proposal of an infinite regress entails a straightforward contradiction (achieving an unachievable fulfillment of conditions) or accepting that nothing exists. Because neither of these are philosophically acceptable, we must reject the possibility of an infinite series of caused realities without (at least one) uncaused reality.

Further note: Whatever is the uncaused cause, it must be 1) active and 2) existing, since nothing can serve as a cause (either ultimate or proximate) unless these two requirements are met.

Stage 2 - Proof the Uncaused Cause must be pure existence itself

Definitions:

Actual reality: *something which is intensively present or active in reality; a real, current state of activity or affairs.*

Potential/possible reality: *something which exists only dormantly or passively, which must then be caused or brought into existence by something other than itself.*

*For example, I am actually 165lbs, but I am potentially 175lbs. To become 175lbs certain, necessary conditions must be fulfilled to increase my weight — in other words, causes beyond myself are required to actualize that potential (the ingestion of hamburgers, say, from Culvers) which exists only “latently” within the nature of my being a human person. (Whereas possibly being 175lbs does not exist latently within the nature of, say, being an amoeba.) My being 175lbs is a possibility which *could* be actualized if certain, necessary conditions were fulfilled, but are currently not. Therefore, I am actually a 165lb reality, but potentially a 175lb reality.*

The Question: Given the existence of at least one uncaused/unconditioned reality in the totality of reality, could this uncaused reality be anything but actual in the fullest, possible sense? In other words, could there be a potential part (or potential dimension, or whatever) within the uncaused cause which is *different from* the sheer, unqualified *act* of existence existing through itself?

The Answer:

Given the necessity of an uncaused reality to (ultimately) ground the existence of everything else in reality, this uncaused reality could not be merely (or evenly partly) potential, otherwise it would be in need of an external cause to activate it. But that is a contradiction, since we are then saying there is an uncaused cause which requires a cause, which is nonsense.

Furthermore, there can be no potential part in this uncaused reality (like me being potentially bigger), because then something would be needed to activate (or cause) it, which just reinvents the original problem. And if that should be the case then this being with a potential part couldn't be the ultimate, uncaused reality, whereas whatever could (ultimately) activate/cause that potential part would *itself* be the actual uncaused reality.

Alternatively, if we say there is a potential part in this uncaused reality, but no possible way for this part to be activated/caused, then we are positing nothing (after all, a potential part which has no possible way to be activated/caused = literally nothing; a non-possible reality.) And so no such potential part exists. So, whatever else this uncaused reality is, it must be the pure, undifferentiated act of existence existing through itself. ‘

To put it another way, if anything were different from the act of existence existing through itself that something would (by default) *not* be an act of existence existing through itself and therefore be in need of a cause. But then we'd be stipulating an uncaused-caused reality which (like a square-circle) is a contradiction and cannot exist. Therefore, whatever else this uncaused reality is, it must be a pure, undifferentiated act of existence existing through itself — actual in the fullest possible sense with no potential parts or privations of being.

Lastly, if we decide to deny the actual existence of this pure, undifferentiated act of existence existing through itself, we are back to affirming nothing came to exist, which is contrary to fact. Therefore, there must be (at least one) pure, undifferentiated act of existence existing through itself to serve as the uncaused cause which explains why anything else exists.

Looking Ahead: Limited acts of being (like us) are not something added to a baseline, minimum level of existence in reality. Instead, God, as the sheer act of existence itself, is the ultimate and all-enveloping maximum from which all finite, limited acts of existence are merely parcels or reflections — they are acts of existence with a set of minuses, not pluses. This is how to properly view the participation metaphysics of St. Thomas, where every finite, limited act of being has its act of existence only insofar as it participates in the divine act, through the free donation of existence by God.

Stage 3 - Proof that an Uncaused Cause Must Be Unlimited (Read: Qualitatively Perfect) In Being

Definitions:

A metaphysical limit (or restricted essence) — anything that bounds existence with respect to power, value, knowledge, weight, shape, charge, spin, spacial or temporal location, etc. The word “restriction” or “finite perfection” could also be used. For example, a cat is a limited being (a being with a restricted act of existence), since a cat exists but only so far; only in a cat-like mode. A cat, therefore, can do some things (like scratch and meow) but not all things (like birth cows). Note: Nearly everything we encounter is a limited, finite act of existence.

Note: In our present context, certain terms such “finite” and “infinite”, or “limited” and “unlimited”, are to be understood in a qualitative, rather than quantitative, sense. Thus, to suggest the existence of a qualitatively infinite being doesn't mean something which goes on “forever” in space and time, but rather is something which has no inherent restrictions or boundaries on being, and, in this sense, would mean something which is conditioned by neither space nor time, etc, but exists immaterially and eternally — that is, is transcendent of all restrictions on being, including spacial and temporal. Of course, we are still working to the conclusion that such a being exists, but it's helpful to clarify this position before proceeding to avoid unnecessary confusion.

The Question: *Could any finite, limited being (that is, any being with a restricted essence, whether a cat, an amoeba, or an electron) be the uncaused cause?*

The Answer: No.

Because if any finite, limited being were identical to the act of existing through itself, then everything which exists would exist in that particular, limited mode of being. For example, if an electron *just were* the act of existing through itself then everything would exist as an electron (exist in virtue of being an electron). But clearly that does not have to be the case, nor is it the case. There are protons, anti-electrons, etc.

Or, if Pat Flynn were identical to the act of existing through itself (that is, if something existed in virtue of being Pat Flynn), then everything which exists would be Pat Flynn, and that obviously isn't the case, either. There are other beings aside Pat Flynn.

*In short, to exist = to be an electron? Clearly not. Because things exist which aren't electrons.
So, to exist $\neq$ to be an electron. What about, to exist = to be Pat Flynn? Also, clearly not.
Because things exist which aren't Pat Flynn.*

So, whatever limits (or restricts) an act of existence must be inherently different from the act of existence existing through itself; otherwise everything in existence would exist in that limited and particular, finite mode. But that again does not have to be the case (nor is it the case), because there are many, different finite modes of existence to be found in reality.

In other words, there must be a real distinction between any limited, finite instance of being (a restricted essence) and its act of existence. Further, because of this metaphysical, real distinction between limited essence and existence -- the “what” of something, on the one hand, and the “is” of something, on the other -- any limited, finite essence *must* have existence imparted to it from some external cause and ultimately by the pure, undifferentiated act of existence existing through itself. Therefore, every limited, finite instance of being (every restricted essence) is a caused reality. Therefore, no limited, finite instance of being could be

the uncaused caused. Therefore, the uncaused cause must be unlimited and qualitatively perfect (free of any/all limits, restrictions, or boundaries on being) in its existence.

Furthermore, limited acts of existence, whether temporal, or spacial, or particular “modes of acting” such as a cat-mode or electron-mode are ontologically (that is, in the order of being) subordinate to the act of existence *as such*. In other words, existence is required for time, but time is not required for existence, since non-temporal entities are conceivable (and arguably) exist. Also, existence is required for electrons, but not electrons for existence, since non-electrons also exist. Etc, etc. This reaffirms the previous conclusion — that limits on being (restricted essences) are less fundamental than being itself, and require an external cause (that is, a distinct act of existence) to exist.

Another way to acknowledge this stage of the argument is to recognize how limiting essences or restrictions one being create (through the principle of non-contradiction) incompatible states of affairs.

For example, to exist as an electron is thus to **not** exist (with respect to the same place and time) as a proton. But if protons are possible (which they are) then electrons could not be the ultimate, uncaused reality because protons would be impossible to cause, since the essence of “being an electron” excludes (with respect to the same place and time) the essence of “being a proton.” The limits of one restricted essence “block out” the limits of being of another restricted essence (again, with respect to the same place and time), hence the contradiction of a proton-electron, square-circle, etc. So, if the ultimate, uncaused reality were an electron, this reality could not ultimately cause the existence of protons, due to their mutually incompatible modes of existing. But protons exist. So, the ultimate, uncaused reality cannot be an electron — or any other limited instance of being, for that matter.

By limiting any instance of being to X you inherently “make room” for instances of being which are Not-X, and therefore incompatible states of affairs. For example, by limiting an instance of being to a “cat” you make room for something to exist as a non-cat, such as a dog or a roast beef sandwich, and such beings are therefore incompatible with the act of existing as a cat (in the same respect, place, and time) — the boundaries of one exclude the boundaries of another. To exist as a cat is to not exist as a dog (or a roast beef sandwich), and vice versa.

Thus, if any act of existence (X) is limited in being there can then be real or really possible state of affairs (on the same level of being) which are excluded from, and incompatible with, X. However, there can be no real or really possible states of affairs which are incompatible with (or excluded from) the ultimate ground of reality — that is, the uncaused cause — otherwise they wouldn't be real or really possible realities. Therefore, the uncaused cause is comprised of no essential limits, boundaries, or restrictions on being. The uncaused cause **must** be qualitatively infinite and therefore all-inclusive.

In other words, saying the uncaused cause (aka, the ultimate ground of everything that exists) is a limited or finite act of being is equivalent to saying “impossible states of affairs are possible,” since you are asserting there could then be possible states of affairs whose conditions for existence could not be ultimately fulfilled by the uncaused cause (that is a possible-impossible reality), which is absurd. The unconditioned reality *must* be compatible with, and able to ultimately fulfill, the conditions for all real and really possible realities, since any real or really possible reality (in as much as it is real or really possible) *must* be able to have its conditions ultimately fulfilled by this uncaused reality (otherwise it is not a real or really possible reality, since any hypothetical possible reality which cannot have the conditions for its existence fulfilled is not **really** a possible reality, after all, but an impossible reality). So this unconditioned reality must be unlimited and unrestricted in being — it must be absolutely, ontologically simple — with no intrinsic or extrinsic restrictions, limits, or boundaries of any kind, and therefore inclusive of, and capable of producing all possibilities of being (the definition of omnipotence).

Summary: If there are limits on being then incompatible states of affairs are possible. But no incompatible states of (logically coherent) affairs are possible with an uncaused cause, since all possible states of affairs must ultimately derive existence from an uncaused cause. Therefore, there can be no limits on being with respect to an uncaused cause. (Modus tollens)

Therefore, the uncaused reality has no limits, restrictions, or boundaries on being. It exists as the pure and perfect (read: fully actual) plenitude of existence as such.

Alternative Path #1: There is another (perhaps simpler) way to arrive at the same conclusion, suggested by philosopher Norris Clarke. For any limited being there must be a principle of selection for why such a being exists in this or that particular way and not some other. All limits, as Norris Clarke points out, demand an explanation beyond themselves, point to some set of ontologically prior conditions which, upon their fulfillment, determined that finite act of existence to exist in just the way that it does, and not some other. But since limits are themselves a limit (true by definition), we cannot explain the existence of any/all limits by invoking further limits (explaining X in terms of X, which is circular). Therefore, to explain the existence of any finite, limited instance of being, we ultimately need (at least one) unlimited and qualitatively infinite act of existence.

To deny this conclusion is either to 1) suggest that something could pre-exist itself to determine its particular, finite mode of being, which is absurd, or 2) whatever is the ultimate, unlimited source of being would (for whatever reason) restrict itself to acting only in finite, limited mode of existence, which makes no sense, but also invites the previous contradictions explained above. The only way to avoid these absurdities to affirm the existence of at least one perfect and qualitatively infinite act of existence existing through itself which can ultimately fulfill the conditions for (that is, cause) everything else that exists.

Alternative Path #2: Another way to see why the uncaused cause must be free of all restrictions, boundaries, and/or limits on being (that is, utterly transcendent) comes back to what was

ademonstrated in Stage 2. Any being which is limited has a certain potential that has not been actualized. For example, a cat is currently limited to where it is in space, but potentially could be somewhere else. A cat is also currently limited in weight, but potentially heavier. And so on. Limits entail potencies in being. But the uncaused cause must be purely actual and cannot be comprised of potentiality. Therefore, in virtue of being purely actual, the uncaused cause is also unlimited — or, to phrase it differently, there is no distance of difference between the “what” and the “is” of the uncaused cause.

Stage 4 - There Can Be One (and Only One) Uncaused Cause

The next step in the argument is fairly simple and admitted by most who’ve reached the previous conclusions: There can be one (and only one) uncaused cause.

The Question: Could there be more than one uncaused cause, which, as we’ve already demonstrated, must be an absolutely simple, perfect and unrestricted act of existence existing through itself?

The Answer. No.

For there to be more than one absolutely simple, perfect, and unrestricted act of existence existing through itself, there would need to be some differentiating feature between them. But for there to be something by which to differentiate one absolutely simple, perfect and unrestricted act of existence existing through itself from another absolutely simple, perfect and unrestricted act of existence existing through itself, one would need to lack something the other has, and would therefore no longer be perfect but limited, restricted and comprised of some potential (or lacking in being), and once that happens, in need of a cause (as proved in the previous stage). So no such differentiation is possible, and because no such differentiation is possible, there can be one (and only one) absolutely perfect, simple, and unrestricted act of existence existing through itself.

Stage 5 - Proof This Uncaused Cause is the Ultimate and Continual Creator of Everything Else That Exists

This step of the argument is also swiftly deduced so far as the previous steps have been properly acknowledged. Since no conditioned or caused reality can ever become an unconditioned or uncaused reality and since there can only be one (and only) one uncaused reality in the totality of reality, everything else that exists can continue to exist only insofar as the uncaused reality continues to cause — that is, fulfill the conditions for — its existence.

Thus, no limited, finite being can ever have “existential inertia” and everything else apart from the uncaused cause which exists can exist and continue to exist only insofar as it is continually “donated” existence by and through the absolutely simple, perfect and unrestricted act of existence existing through itself.