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An apologetic for the existence of God

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The question of God's existence is a critical one in philosophy. It affects the whole tenor of human life, whether we are regarded as supreme beings in the universe or whether there is a superior being [1] that we must love and obey – or perhaps defy. There are three basic arguments for the existence of God.

In this paper an attempt is made to present the existence of God by using rational approach, which deals with knowledge and reason which a common person can understand. The general reason why so many people do not believe in the existence of God is because of presupposed erroneous assumptions, and poor defense they encountered of the existence of God. Another factor that works against belief in God is the backdrop of Darwinian evolution, which had been widely taught and upheld in secular schools and universities. The few arguments used to demonstrate the existence of God may have inherent loop-holes or contradictions, and they failed to convince a skeptical mind. Before presenting a valid and fool-proof approach for the defense of the existence of God, a few approaches will be considered which do not offer a completely satisfactory defense.

Demonstrate the existence of God using rational argument that uses logic and reason. Rationalism is characterized by its stress on the innate or a priori ability of human reason to know truth. Basically, rationalists hold that what is knowable or demonstrable by human reason is true. The seeds of rationalism have been firmly planted in the Western world since at least the time of Plato. In the Middle Age, the cause was advanced by thinkers like Avicenna and scholastics like Duns Scotus [2]. The three approaches, based on reason and logic are presented below highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each argument. Cosmological argument is the best defense for the existence of God.

1. The Ontological Argument:

The name, "Ontological" was coined by Immanuel Kant. Ontological means "of the order of being." The two proponents of this argument were the medieval theologian Anselm and seventeenth century philosopher Rene Descartes. It is also known as the a priori approach. According to Descartes certain ideas are always logically connected with each other. For example, you cannot have a mountain without a valley; a triangle is always geometric object whose three angles add up to 180 degrees. This connectedness is expressed by saying that certain concepts (e.g., mountains) entail other concepts (e.g., valleys). Based on this Descartes stipulates that the idea of God is always connected with the idea of having all perfections. The word perfection was defined as a positive property, and it makes something good to have it than the lack of it. The concept of the existence of God then calls forth for all the perfections and that God possess them in an unlimited way. At this point Descartes adds that "existence" as one such perfection. He made this assumption that it is intrinsically better to exist than not to exist. Then existence becomes one of the perfections of God. Based on these assumptions the following conclusion can be made: God, by definition, has all perfections. Existence is a perfection. Therefore, God exists.

The Drawbacks: This concerns with the issue of inadequacy of the argument. The first issue to be raised would be the question of God possessing all perfections. Many people do not

take this assumption for granted or agree to the statement that God is perfect in all attributes. Thus it brings us back to a supposition which is controversial. The second one is a question of logical deduction. The idea of assuming existence as a perfection. While many philosophers agree to the fact that existence is a perfection many others do not concede to this, and say that existence is not a property. Instead existence means that the properties are real, and the existence itself does not add any additional property. Thus this fails to stand unequivocally against the critics which can actively overthrow this reason.

2. The Teleological Argument:

It is one of the most oldest and most popular and intelligible of the theistic proofs. William Paley introduced this argument in the nineteenth century. It came from the Greek word *telos*, which means "goal." Thus a teleological argument is based on an objective goal. Paley argues that in many ways the universe resembles a watch. The inference is that, by an analogy, various things that are true of the watch must also be true of the world, particularly the property of having a maker. He elaborates it by inviting us to take a walk through the forest. When we find the watch by the side of the path we would immediately recognize it as a piece of smooth-functioning machinery, something that did not grow there in the forest, but must have been made by an intelligent designer. By this analogy, Paley directs the attention to the universe and observes how much more it is a complex, well-running machine. Everything that can be said of the watch in this respect can be said all the more of universe. If the watch needs a maker for these reasons, then the universe must need a maker all the more, and the world maker is the one to whom we refer as God.

Voltaire puts it in rather simplistic terms: "If a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker but the universe does not prove the existence of a great Architect, then I consent to be called a fool [3]."

Drawbacks: David Hume offered some remarks, which will demonstrate the weakness of this argument. First, the only reason we know that watches need watchmakers is because we have seen watches being made. We have no such experience for universes since we have never seen them being created. The second is that of things who do not have mechanical arrangements to function, such as plants and animals. They come into existence through reproduction and grow organically. May be in this respect the world is more like a plant than like a watch. Then it would not need a maker. Thirdly, many things are made by several individuals working together. Therefore it is not unusual to suppose that the universe could have been created by a committee of gods. Fourthly, the maker of the universe does not necessarily be a great, all-perfect God. The maker of this universe could have been a baby god just learning how to create worlds. Lastly, the whole universe may have come about by chance.

Proof using Logic and clear common sense:

By using pure laws of logic and reason one can attempt to demonstrate the existence of God. In doing so, one can not violate the natural laws of logic, and scientific knowledge available at hand [4].

The Presence or Absence Argument:

A chemist detects the presence of a chemical in a solution by the effects the solution has on another chemical. The chemist establishes the positive identification of a particular chemical by the properties of the chemical. Likewise, a detective may figure out that the butler committed the murder without having seen the butler do it but on the basis of the evidence the culprit left behind. This is the general pattern of argumentation one should employ concerning the existence of God. One cannot make some kind of direct check to "see" if He is here. Nor can one deduce His existence from universally accepted premises. One can see

the effects of His presence. In other words, one can look at the world and see if the world is constructed in such a way that it is reasonable to believe that there must be a God.

The "Unless" Argument:

The second approach is to use the "unless" argument to demonstrate the existence of God. This is also known as transcendental logic. Transcendental logic is the type of reasoning process whereby one uncovers necessary conditions without which certain phenomena could not be true. When you name any US president, you can be sure that you are naming a person over thirty-five years old, because the U.S. constitution makes this a necessary condition.

Take for example the following very simple inference: "Rick Mears must really know how to drive because he has won the Indianapolis 500." If someone were to challenge such a statement, one would point out that being able to drive a car well is a necessary condition for winning the Indy 500. Strictly speaking, this does not need neither inductive nor a deductive argument but just pointing the common sense reason behind the statement. Another example: "Professor Ming Yang has Ph.D. degree to teach graduate students at University of California at Berkeley." If there is any challenge to this statement, the statement itself defends from the challenge. In order to be professor or even an assistant professor the minimum required education, at any university in the world, is a Ph.D. degree. Put it in other words, Ming Yang would not be professor unless he possesses a Ph.D. degree.

The "unless" approach or the transcendental logic is the best possible way to demonstrate the existence of God. This approach will be used in cosmological argument to defend the existence of God.

3. The Cosmological Argument:

The name of the argument is derived from the word cosmos meaning "world." The idea is that one can infer the existence of God from what one can see in the world. Thomas Aquinas used this argument first time, and it is based on the following ten points [5].

1. Something exists.
2. Each thing that exists is necessary or contingent.
3. A necessary being would have to be God.
4. The world cannot be a necessary being.
5. There can be only one necessary being.
6. Unless there is a necessary being there cannot be any contingent beings.
7. A necessary being exists.
8. Therefore, God exists.
9. Therefore, only one God exists.
10. The God of theism exists.

1. Something exists.

I exist. You exist. The universe exists. A flower exists. My pen exists. It does not even have to be material object. If you doubt this statement, your doubting exists, and that is good enough. In short, if you find anything controversial in this statement that something exists.

2. Each thing that exists is either necessary or contingent.

Contingent means "dependent on something else." Necessary means "totally independent of anything else." By their definition, these two properties are exclusive. In short, if you are one, you cannot be the other. Example: The opposite of a dog is not a cat, but a non-dog. The opposite of white is not necessarily black, but it could be brown, yellow or green. Anything that is not white could be an opposite to white. Therefore, white and non-white beings are mutually exclusive. On the other hand a contingent being depends upon something else to be in existence. I.e. the existence of something else causes the contingent being to exist.

A contingent being abides by the following three properties:

(a) A contingent being is caused. For example, Kentucky Fry Chicken (KFC) fast food centers are contingent upon the poultry farms where they grow chicken. If there are no chicken, KFC stores would not exist. Therefore, KFC stores are contingent upon chicken. (b) A contingent being is sustained. For example, my continuing existence is made possible, among other factors, by the food I have eaten, medicines I have taken, and the laws of universe of which I am a part. (c) A contingent being is determined. i.e. contingent beings not only get their raw existence, but also the specification of what they exist as, from external causes. For example, Nelson Mandela did not chose to be born in South Africa, and to black parents. He came into being because he was born to black parents in South Africa. These external factors actually determined his identity as a human being.

A necessary being abides by the following properties:

A necessary being does not need to fulfill any of the above properties. The necessary being should have the following qualities: it would have to be uncaused, un-sustained by anything outside itself, and undetermined by outside factors. It would exist totally independent of all other beings.

Therefore it is crystal clear that a contingent being and a necessary being are mutually exclusive. Going back to the initial case of mutual exclusivity, one can state that if anything exists it ought to be a contingent being or a necessary being. It cannot be both, or partial of either of the two.

3. A necessary being would have to be God.

By definition, a necessary being is uncaused, un-sustained, and undetermined. It exists completely apart from any external factors or influences. However, this idea does not preclude the possibility of this necessary being responding to contingent beings, but it would neither need them nor be compelled by them. Thus the necessary being would be:

- * Independent
- * Unlimited
- * Infinite
- * Eternal - unrestricted by time
- * Omnipresent - unrestricted by space
- * Immutable – unchangeable
- * Pure actuality - would have no potentiality
- * In possession of all of its properties in an equally unlimited way.

By using logic one can demonstrate that it has power, knowledge, and goodness, then it would have to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. All the above attributes boil it down to God, who only can have such attributes.

4. The world cannot be a necessary being.

To say that the world is the necessary being is tantamount to saying that world is God. This is in direct contradiction with the reason of logic because everything in this world appears to have been started by some invisible force at a given point of time. In a way, the world needs a first cause to keep it going, and even needs some invisible force to sustain it. Therefore, the world cannot be a necessary being. Doing it otherwise would be equal to pantheism, and pantheism is impossible.

5. There can be only one necessary being.

If there is a necessary being we would like to prove that it is the only one. There cannot be no more than one. According to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz principle of the identity of indiscernible if we say that two things are identical there cannot be any minute difference between the two. Stretching it further, identical twins are not all identical because there tends to be a few differences between the two. In nature, there is nothing like perfect identicalness, even in terms of mass production of same objects. Applying this principle to necessary beings, it will immediately become clear that there cannot be two necessary beings. First, in order to have two necessary beings they would have to differ in some property or other. Then one necessary being would have to have a property that the other one lacks or vice versa. Given the definition of a necessary being, such thing is impossible. A necessary being is unlimited, and it cannot lack any properties appropriate to it, and it cannot have any contingent properties. Consequently, to be a necessary being it must have all of the right properties, no more and no less. Therefore, since there are no properties in which they can differ, there can only be one necessary being.

6. Unless there is a necessary being there cannot be any contingent beings.

By using "unless" or transcendental logic we can demonstrate that the existence of a necessary being is a necessary condition for there to be contingent beings. Example 1: When a person watches a beautiful chandelier suspended in a Gothic cathedral, the person may not see roof clearly and how the chandelier was mounted. If someone were to say that the chandelier is hanging to the last link of the chain without any support from roof it would be a foolish answer because chains cannot hang from themselves. The simple answer would be to point out that there is support key mounted to the roof which is holding the chandelier chain. Unless the chain is suspended from a fastener that does not depend on the chain, the chain could not hang. Example 2: Watching a long freight train helps us to understand that there is an engine in the front pulling all cabooses. Even if someone were to point out that the cabooses are pulling themselves it would be a ridiculous statement. If someone were to point out that first motion was caused by an unknown object and then the caboose went into the continuous motion, again it would be a ridiculous statement because the caboose would eventually stop after a short distance due to mass and gravity limitation. Thus the freight train demonstrates that the cars need an independent engine which can set the motion and sustain the motion, and in doing so it is overcoming the mass and gravity limitation. An infinite number of railroad cars without an engine would still be stationary. An infinite number of chain links without a hook would still lie on the floor. It only points out that there ought to be a maker of an engine to pull the cars, as well as a plumber who installed a fastener at the roof top for the chandelier to hang on.

The uncaused Cause:

For example, if someone were to show a beautifully designed scientific experiment where things are in motion by themselves, the first simple question would be how the experiment was energized. By showing several intermittent stages which are causes to the motion of the whole object would not be a satisfactory answer because these events could be energized by themselves by a first source of momentum. What is that first source? In this case,

it could be a simple battery or an electromagnet. Even a simple illustration like this points out that every event in nature calls for something that initiates it or helps to proceed to the next stage. However, adding up all the contingent forces in the scientific experiment do not add up to source of momentum, or the necessary being which could be a battery or an electromagnet. Now, suppose the necessary being is removed from the scientific experiment, then the momentum of object may continue for some time but ultimately will stop because of natural laws such as mass, gravity and air pressure that opposes the motion. Thus it is clear that the necessary being, a battery or an electromagnet, is the source of motion as well as the sustainer of the motion. *Therefore, a necessary being exists apart from the contingent beings, and its very existence is necessary for the existence of contingent beings.*

Reason for Characteristics:

A corollary of the above principle is that you cannot give what you do not have. A battery or an electromagnet cannot set the momentum in the scientific instrument unless they have a source, be it either potential or kinetic energy, of their own, and which is independent of the instrument itself. The outward manifestation of motion in the instruments refers to the potential energy of the battery or magnet, which means the source is instilling something positive that the instrument is lacking. Analogous to this argument is the first cause of the universe is still infinite, and by reason of logic it is omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, etc. Just like the scientific instrument, the nature, creatures and humanity manifests something that was instilled in them such as intelligence, life, energy, love, emotions, hatred, anger, jealousy, creativity etc., which only reflect the qualities or the attributes of the first cause who brought this world into existence. If there is beauty in the creation, it came from the creator. If there is love in the creation, it came from the creator. Consequently the creator is supremely loving and beautiful. Personhood is a trait of the world that the creator has instilled in humanity. This is the reason why we assert that we are not just biological organisms but are individual persons. Thus the first cause must be supremely personal. Therefore, the first cause is God who is a person.

7. A necessary being exists.

Earlier we stated that something exists. It must be either necessary or contingent. If it is a contingent being, there must still be a necessary being since it is demonstrated above that there cannot be any contingent beings if there is no necessary being. Therefore, a necessary being exists.

8. Therefore, God exists.

From the above qualities or properties of the necessary being we have shown that a necessary being ought to be God. Only God can have such attributes as a necessary being to the world. Therefore, we can affirm that God exists.

9. The God of theism exists.

Since we demonstrated earlier that there cannot be two necessary beings, and that only one necessary being can exist. This rules out the possibility of pantheism. Given the existence of the world, and its nature of operation, it is more plausible to believe that God of theism exists than otherwise.

Objections:

The most serious objection is that it is based on an uncritical acceptance of the "principle of sufficient reason," the notion that every event has a cause. Hume argues that causation is psychological, not a metaphysical, principle, one whose origins lay in the human propensity to assume necessary connections between events when all we see is contiguity and

succession. Kant follows Hume by arguing that causation is a category built into our minds as one of many ways in which we order our experience [6].

These objections fail because the nature of this universe, such as, shifting of islands, disappearance of islands, natural catastrophes, and sustenance of all forms life, seem to clearly show an action energized by a force invisible. Besides, since the human mind can grasp and understand the physiological as well as psychological issues of life to some extent it would be unreasonable to cast down this argument saying it is just human way of looking at the world.

Therefore, God exists.

References:

- 1- Being: The quality of existing, the most general property to everything that is. In Greek philosophy being was usually contrasted with becoming or change. Walter A. Elwell, *The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991).
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- 4- Most of the information presented in this paper comes from Winfried Corduan's book, "NO DOUBT About It," *The Case for Christianity* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997).
- 5- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, question 2, article 3.
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