

The Philosophical Basis for the Existence of God

I. Two Basic Possibilities: “God is” or “God is not.”

A. “There *is no* God.”

- A philosophically negative statement.
(Empiricism—touch, taste, feel, measurable)
 - Our thoughts are not subject to empiricism.
 - The concept of empiricism is not subject to empiricism.
 - Even Alfred J. Ayer, who first postulated empiricism said it was a blind alley.
- A human being cannot prove a philosophically negative statement because he is finite and cannot provide all of the evidence in the universe.
 - If there is anywhere in the universe that you have not been, God could be there.
 - What about the statement, “There are no absolutes.”
- A philosophically *positive* statement requires *some* evidence to prove. As Christians, we can offer some historical evidence for the existence of God.
- From atheism to agnosticism.
- Wish fulfillment cuts both ways.
 - God’s holiness wouldn’t be wished for by sinners, but that is how God revealed himself to be.
 - The unbeliever seems more likely to be involved in wish fulfillment.
- Scientific Evidence
 - The Scientific method begins with observation. Since the non-existence of God cannot be observed, it falls outside the bounds of science. “There is no God” is a purely philosophical statement.
 - Evolution is the same. It can be postulated, but since it cannot be observed, it falls outside of the bounds of science.
- Once you’ve convinced someone that atheism is irrational and cannot be proven you have brought them to agnosticism, saying “I don’t know if there is a God.” At which point you may make the statement,

B. “There *is* a God.”

- This is a philosophically positive statement for which proof may be offered.
- We can offer historical proof.
(Josh McDowell’s *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* is an excellent resource for this.)

II. Eight Possible Kinds of Gods

A. Two Primary Categories

1. Dependent (or Contingent, or Finite)
2. Non-Dependent (or Non-Contingent, or Infinite)
 - We can use the word “infinite” but we must be very careful.
 - We must start from the Bible and not start with a conclusion and go to the Bible to find support for it.
 - Read excerpt from pp. 87–88 of *Miracles*, by C.S. Lewis. (copy attached)

B. Two Secondary Categories

1. Material
2. Immaterial (Is also a substance.)

C. Two Tertiary Categories

1. Impersonal
2. Personal—possessing intellect, emotions, and will

- The Non-Dependent, Immaterial, Personal:
 - Yahweh
 - The Messenger of Yahweh (“The angel of the Lord.”)
 - The Spirit of Yahweh (Called the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.)

[For Eight Possible Kinds of Gods, refer to attached chart.
Start with it blank and let the class come up with examples for each.]

References

Elements of Scientific Method

The accepted definition of the scientific method involves most of the following basic facets:

- **Observation.** A constant feature of scientific inquiry, observation includes both unconditioned observations (prior to any theory) as well as the observation of the experiment and its results.
- **Description.** Information derived from experiments must be reliable, i.e., replicable (repeatable), as well as valid (relevant to the inquiry).
- **Prediction.** Information must be valid for observations past, present, and future of given phenomena, i.e., purported "one shot" phenomena do not give rise to the capability to predict, nor to the ability to repeat an experiment.
- **Control.** Actively and fairly sampling the range of possible occurrences, whenever possible and proper, as opposed to the passive acceptance of opportunistic data, is the best way to control or counterbalance the risk of empirical bias.
- **Identification of causes.** Identification of the causes of a particular phenomenon to the best achievable extent. For cause-and-effect relationship to be established, the following must be established:
 - **Time-order relationship.** The hypothesized causes must precede the observed effects in time.
 - **Co-variation of events.** The hypothesized causes must correlate with observed effects. However, correlations between events or variables are not necessarily indicative of causation.
 - **Elimination of plausible alternatives.** This is a gradual process that requires repeated experiments by multiple researchers who must be able to replicate results in order to corroborate them.: All hypotheses and theories are in principle subject to disproof. Thus, there is a point at which there might be a consensus about a particular hypothesis or theory, yet it must in principle remain tentative. As a body of knowledge grows and a particular hypothesis or theory repeatedly brings predictable results, confidence in the hypothesis or theory increases.

our truest principles anything to be true *about*. But if God is the ultimate source of all concrete, individual things and events, then God Himself must be concrete, and individual in the highest degree. Unless the origin of all other things were itself concrete and individual, nothing else could be so; for there is no conceivable means whereby what is abstract or general could itself produce concrete reality. Book-keeping, continued to all eternity, could never produce one farthing. Metre, of itself, could never produce a poem. Book-keeping needs something else (namely, real money put into the account) and metre needs something else (real words, fed into it by a poet) before any income or any poem can exist. If anything is to exist at all, then the Original Thing must be, not a principle nor a generality, much less an "ideal" or a "value," but an utterly concrete fact.

* Probably no thinking person would, in so many words, deny that God is concrete and individual. But not all thinking people, and certainly not all who believe in "religion," keep this truth steadily before their minds. We must beware, as Professor Whitehead says, of paying God ill-judged "metaphysical compliments." We say that God is "infinite." In the sense that His knowledge and power extend not to some things but to all, this is true. But if by using the word "infinite" we encourage ourselves to think of Him as a formless "everything" about whom nothing in particular and everything in general is true, then it would be better to drop that word altogether. Let us dare to say that God is a particular Thing. Once He was the only Thing; but He is creative, He made other things to be. He is not those other things. He is not "universal being": if He were there would be no creatures, for a generality can make nothing. He is "absolute being"—or rather *the Absolute Being*—in the sense that He alone exists in His own right. But there are things which God is not. In that sense He has a determinate character. Thus He is righteous, not a-moral; creative, not inert. The Hebrew writings here observe an admirable balance. Once God says simply I AM, proclaiming the mystery of self-existence. But times without number He says, "I am the Lord"—I, the ultimate Fact, have *this* de-

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↓ terminate character, and not *that*. And men are exhorted to "know the Lord," to discover and experience this particular character.

The error which I am here trying to correct is one of the most sincere and respectable errors in the world; I have sympathy enough with it to feel shocked at the language I have been driven to use in stating the opposite view, which I believe to be the true one. To say that God "is a particular Thing" does seem to obliterate the immeasurable difference not only between what He is and what all other things are but between the very mode of His existence and theirs. I must at once restore the balance by insisting that derivative things, from atoms to archangels, hardly attain to existence at all in comparison with their Creator. Their principle of existence is not in themselves. You can distinguish *what* they are from the fact *that* they are. The definition of them can be understood and a clear idea of them formed without even knowing *whether* they are. Existence is an "opaque" addition to the idea of them. But with God it is not so: if we fully understood *what* God is we should see that there is no question *whether* He is. It would always have been impossible that He should not exist. He is the opaque centre of all existences, the thing that simply and entirely *is*, the fountain of facthood. And yet, now that He has created, there is a sense in which we must say that He is a particular Thing and even one Thing among others. To say this is not to lessen the immeasurable difference between Him and them. On the contrary, it is to recognise in Him a positive perfection which Pantheism has obscured; the perfection of being creative. He is so brim-full of existence that He can give existence away, can cause things to be, and to be really other than Himself, can make it untrue to say that He is everything.

It is clear that there never was a time when nothing existed; otherwise nothing would exist now. But to exist means to be a positive Something, to have (metaphorically) a certain shape or structure, to be this and not that. The Thing which always existed, namely God, has therefore always had His own positive character. Throughout all eternity certain statements about Him would have been true and others false. And from the mere fact of our own