Premise 1: I have idea of a perfect, infinite being.

Premise 2: If I have an idea of a perfect, infinite being, the cause of my idea must be perfect and infinite.

Conclusion: The cause of my idea is perfect and infinite.

Premise 3: Only God (by definition) can be perfect and infinite.

Conclusion: God is the cause of my idea.

Premise 4: There must be at least as much reality in the cause of my idea as in the idea.

Conclusion: God exists. (class notes)

Descartes claims he possesses an idea of perfection and infinity, and that such ideas are not simply manufactured negations since they enable him to understand why he as a person lacks in things, such as knowledge and correctness. Without which the accepted idea of one’s want and imperfection would not be understood, since there would be no standard of something infinite and perfect (Descartes, pg. 16). Because such an idea could not be false and because of premise four, Descartes concludes that the idea’s source must possess those qualities.

Descartes then adds that God is the only thing perfect and infinite, given that God is defined as such. To counter doubts, Descartes points out in terms of act versus potential that if humans were infinite and perfect, they would be able to access all knowledge and understanding, and that they would not be able to increase, since they would have already been all perfect and knowing. Since they can increase, God alone, not humans, must be the cause of his idea.

Finally, Descartes notes that it is obvious that there must be as much reality in the cause as in the effect. According to him, “the ideas in me are like images which…easily fall short of the perfection of the objects from which they have been derived” (Descartes, pg.15). Just as images are not pure reflections of the subject they capture, nothing from something can be of a greater purity than that something. When applied to the argument, since God is the cause of the discussed idea and because the effect exists, God must exist.