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” or ideas that only exist as the opposite of another idea since they enable him to understand why he as a person lacks in things, such as knowledge and correctness( cite ). 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, the idea must be true. In addition, Descartes argues that according to premise four, premise two must be true, that since the effect is perfect and infinite, so must the cause be. Therefore, 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 that if humans were infinite and perfect, they would be able to access all knowledge, and that they would not be able to increase, since they would have already been all knowing (Descartes, pg.17). Since they can increase, God alone, not humans, must be the cause of his idea. Finally, Descartes notes 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). Simply put, nothing from something can be a greater representation than the very thing that is captured. When applied to the argument, since God is the cause of the discussed idea and because the idea exists, God must exist.

Jacob Brink