

This chapter now turns to proofs or arguments and gets us into seeing the dialectical process of thinking which the philosophical method of thought is. This chapter deals with the proofs or arguments for the existence of a deity of some sort and with the arguments dealing with the problem of evil and how an all-powerful, all knowing and all good deity could possibly exist at the same time that evil exists.

PROOFS or ARGUMENTS

A proof in Philosophy is an argument. An argument is a series of claims. Some of the claims are used to support another claim. The claims that are supporting are called the premises of the argument and the claim supported is the conclusion of the argument. The premises are the reasons and evidence to support the conclusion.

LOGIC

There is a branch of Philosophy that looks at the method of critical thinking itself. It is called Logic. Logic looks at arguments and how well premises support conclusions in a general sense. Logic distinguishes types of arguments or proofs.

In this chapter there are no fewer than nine (9) arguments presented for the existence of a deity of some sort. With each of them there are also problems presented or criticisms of those arguments.

The Basic Criteria to Evaluate an Argument looking at the Basic Problems with argument:

1. Premises are false
2. Premises are irrelevant
3. Premises contain the conclusion –Circular Reasoning-pettitio principi
4. Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

So with each and every argument Philosophy wants to carefully and critically examine the reasoning and determine if any of these problems are present. If there are any of these problems, then the argument or proof has flaws in it and such an argument would not or should not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone

who does not believe in the conclusion or wants to reject the conclusion because of their belief system will simply refuse to accept based on emotions or past history but they do not accept the conclusion because the argument it is not rationally compelling of acceptance of its conclusion.

There are several Arguments for God's Existence

Are there any rational reasons to believe?

The question arises as to how humans can be sure that the spiritual being, the Supreme Being actually exists. Throughout recorded history humans have thought of this. There is ample evidence of the belief and a good deal of evidence of humans attempting to provide support for that belief. The arguments or proofs that have been offered will be examined. The arguments each have their critics. None appear to be without weakness.

The idea of god is one of the most fascinating ideas ever to be entertained by the mind of a human being. If there is no god then the idea of god remains as perhaps the single most important and powerful idea to have been created by the mind or minds of humans. The idea provides a foundation for an entire perspective or way to view all of reality. The idea provides a basis for the moral foundation and the foundation for social life. The arguments offered to prove that such a being actually does exist are thus very important.

The arguments have different forms and are based on different foundations. One of the most popular distinctions to make about the arguments and thus to divide them into groups is to note that there are different basis for the arguments. There are those based upon reason and those that rest on experience.

The principle arguments based upon **reason** are:

1. **Ontological argument** - using reason alone and examining the very concept of god as a perfect being
2. **Cosmological argument** - considering the existence of the universe.
3. **Teleological argument** - considering the apparent order of the universe.

Those arguments to prove the existence of God based on **experience** are:

4. **Revelation**- humans experience the deity through an act of the deity in which the deity reveals itself. In this case the revelation is accomplished through teachings given to humans and recorded in some form of scripture or gathered into a book, a bible. The contents of such collections are considered to contain direct instruction from the deity.

5. **Mystical Experience**- an experience of union with the deity which is ineffable and noetic, a numinous experience- mystical consciousness of the "HOLY", infinite dependence, mystery, terror, bliss. The mystical experience is a particular variety of religious experience in which the subject is transformed and reports the loss of individuality, the oneness of all reality, union with the deity, the unity of the subject of the experience with the object of the experience. The commonalities in such experience around the world is termed the consensus mysticum. It has been described by Rudolph Otto as involving an experience characterized as being *tremendum et fascinans*

6. **Direct Religious Experience** experience of a god or spirit or of the divine (the absolute). A Religious experience is an encounter of a human being with a supernatural being, be it a deity or an emissary or intermediary for the deity, nevertheless a spiritual entity. Religious experiences are for the most part, individual and esoteric.

7. **Psychic Phenomena**-which relates to a non-physical realm of existence and the existence of spirits or souls, of which the deity is a member, the Supreme Being, Spirit or Soul

1. The type of psychic phenomena involved here would be those that would support the immortality of the soul and survival after death. They are the phenomena that provide support for the post-mortem survival hypothesis

- apparitions-spirits/ ghosts/ poltergeists
- séances - communication with the dead
- reincarnation memories
- near death experiences-NDE's
- death bed observations
- sacred scripture

8. Miracles- experienced events that could only be caused by a divine all powerful being

9. Pragmatism – faith and reason

These are arguments that lead to belief based on practical considerations and the weighing of odds or the likelihood of certain outcomes.

There are also arguments that attempt to disprove that the god of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic Traditions exists. One of the most famous and powerful is based on the existence of evil.

The following sections shall be covering all of the approaches listed above.