

---

## UNIT 3    MODERN ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

---

### Contents

- 3.0    Objectives
- 3.1    Introduction
- 3.2    Rationalism
- 3.3    Empiricism
- 3.4    Idealism
- 3.5    Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6    Key Words
- 3.7    Further Readings and References
- 3.8    Answers to Check Your Progress

---

### 3.0    OBJECTIVES

---

We try to give synthesized answers to the question of God-talk in the Modern philosophers. How did the rationalists, empiricists and idealists apprehend the reality of God? And what are the basic premises through which the inference with regard to existence of God is reached? These are the ultimate questions, worth the effort of probing in this unit. By the end of this unit one should be able

- To have a basic understanding of modern philosophers’ assumptions, the content, the avowal in disproving the earlier attempts and proving one’s own thesis as truth bearing.
- To evolve a critical appraisal of the philosophers with the hints given for discussions.

---

### 3.1    INTRODUCTION

---

Theodicy provides us with the sufficient material with proofs for and against the existence of God. Here we deal with the modern philosophers’ arguments either proving it directly or in an in-direct way. We start with the rationalists, proceeding to empiricists and culminating our study with the idealists. Only selected few philosophers are taken for our study for leaving the rest is due to time and space constraints.

---

### 3.2    RATIONALISM

---

#### Descartes

Descartes begins his philosophy by Doubting- himself and God. The former is resolved through the inference “Cogito Ergo Sum” ‘I think therefore I am.’ He proceeds to say that God’s existence is firmly grounded than ours moreover God is not a deceiver hence the task to prove God’s existence is undertaken.

Substance is the primary determination- accident adds quality to it- is a secondary determination. ‘Substance is one, which requires nothing else other than itself in

**Problem of Affirming God’s Existence**

order to exist.’ God is the substance which is infinite, independent, all knowing, all powerful and by which man and all that exist have been created. God is the pure subject- Other creatures too can be called substance in as much as they depend on god.

The idea of god is At Intra - from within. By nature we have innate potentiality from birth, to form the idea of God. The idea of infinite substance should have proceeded from an existing infinite substance. We see that there is more reality in infinite than in finite substance. Atheist detests from activating such innate idea of God.

The Innate ideas go along with the external world. God bridges these entities. I realize my limitation and imperfection only with the comparison with the unlimited and infinite being .., that being is God upon whom Man’s existence relies.., from whom Man derives his existence, for man can not be the ultimate cause of himself and the world – we require a being different from himself who cannot be less than God. Mountain and valley need one another and so man and god. Animals and plants are considered as mere sophisticated machines for men.

Through the process of abstraction we get the idea of perfect being from a limited and imperfect being.

God – means who has all perfections in an unlimited way. Existence is perfection- so He should have existence. Perfection is further divided into ESSENTIAL and EXISTENCE. The former adds to what one is and the latter makes our very being-not adding something and not becoming a part of what we are. Hence there is a need to assert God as substance and the inevitability of his Existence, which is thus proved.

**Discussion**

- Proofs -reproducing the old.
- Clumsy definition of Substance.
- Devaluing animal world and plants
- Branding atheists as fools.
- Dependency of the creature - devaluing-unwarranted supposition?

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

                    b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Define the key concepts in Descartes: substance, accidents and innate ideas.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Spinoza

He is a God Intoxicated man as Germans brand him. He comes out with the philosophy of ONENESS or UNIFICATION. Every thing is basically one. A tailored definition of substance from Descartes is vividly seen; Substance is that which can be understood without the help of any other thing. The Substance is God or Nature. Under the aspect of TIME it is NATURE. Under the aspect of INTUITION it is GOD. God and nature are inter-changeable. They are not like cause and effect- as though god is the immaterial cause and the world as material effect

He speaks of EMANATION –which would mean Flow out of.

It is not creation-as if God making something out of nothing.

Emanation is God makes something out of itself. E.g. Spider emanates its web itself. God or Nature evolves into two directions. They are spirit and matter. They are infinite and eternal. The characteristic of spirit is thought and that of matter is existence. The 'Good' must be shared- so God wants to share-emanate. Thus emanation happens necessarily and eternally yet freely because compulsion is within.

The greatest virtue of mind is to know God as the universal cause- logically inter-connected infinite system- and to perceive the knowledge of union which the mind has with the whole nature.

## Discussion

- If god does not fall under the primary datum of experience can HE be the starting point of philosophy?
- Pantheism- identifying world with God.
- Freedom is absence of compulsion from without, but from within, accepted by its very nature-God.( presumption )
- Abstract Monism- the finite objects and things are illusory modes having no existence of their own? Man, his thoughts too share the same fate?

## Leibniz

He is the first one to give us a word 'theodicy'. His indeterminism, many realities were all opposed to the one reality and determinism of Spinoza. He brings in the concept of **Monad** and further proceeds to expound the theory of **pre-established Harmony**. Monad signifies unity, the One simple substance that lives, forms the soul and spirit of the entities. They are un-extended, shapeless, size-less, being not a mathematical or physical point., but truly are the metaphysically existent point.

Every Monad is active and alive- certain variation in degree is admitted. Each Monad is a summary of the entire world. There is no interaction between the monads. They have within themselves the source or their activity. Man is the colony of monads, a contingent being and God is said to be the uncreated monad.

The substance is re-worked, explained in terms of monads ..., having the capacity of action..., conversely compound substance is a sort of collection of monads.

Though isolated, having separate purpose, monads behave in accordance with its created purpose; monads form a unity of the ordered universe, thus there is a

**Problem of Affirming God's Existence**

large single harmony. Each monad mirrors the whole universe. Such a harmony is the result of God's activity. This pre-established harmony is the sufficient proof of God's existence.

On proving God's existence: From sufficient cause, arrive at that substance which is invariable and self-dependent, which is God. From a-priory arrive at a Being in whom there is no distinction between existence and possibility. From the law of continuity view perfection and extend it to the One who is the perfection of all qualities. For cause of the world existing outside of it, is the rational and eternal cause, an eternal mind behind the eternal and inevitable truths and a creator- God is being confirmed.

**Discussion**

- Every thing is already preset in the mind of God- strivings towards perfection –Useless- a sort of fatalism?
- Man's freedom curtailed- considered as mere puppet of God?
- Mystery of evil and suffering?

---

**3.3 EMPIRICISM**

---

**Locke**

For Locke knowledge is restricted to ideas resulting from the objects we experience ..., that takes two forms. One is sensation and another reflection.

We have the experience of sensation then only we have experience of reflection. Our mind is 'tabula rasa' empty sheet and experience writes knowledge on it. There is no innate ideas..., through senses we receive the distinctive perception of objects thus ideas of qualities we get. Reflection is the activity of the mind – produces ideas- involves perception, thinking, willing, believing, reasoning and knowing.

Simple ideas originate from sensation. Mind sorts out differences. Mind works to separate them then begins to abstract culminating in forming complex ideas.

Quality is the power to produce any idea in our mind. Primary quality is found in the object such as solidity, extension figure etc., and secondary qualities produce ideas such as color, sounds, taste and odor in our mind.

Substance causes sensation, and is the object of sensitive knowledge- gives power that helps for regularity and consistency to our ideas.

But the idea of God is not clear and distinct as the idea of substance inferred from simple ideas. It is the product of demonstrative reason. We have intuitive knowledge which is clear and certain e.g. knowledge of our own existence ..., sure.

Demonstrative idea is that mind progress from simple ones to other ideas in which mind engages in agreement or disagreement. Demonstration is the mode of perception that leads the mind to knowledge of some form of existing reality. Every thing begins and end in time..., a non-entity cannot produce any real being, it is an evident demonstration that from eternity there has been something- that

eternal being is most knowing, powerful and it is plain to admit the truth of the knowledge of God though senses haven't immediately discovered it to us. Thus demonstrative knowledge ensures us the certainty of reality of God's existence.

Intuitive knowledge gives certainty that we exist and Demonstrative knowledge, certainty of reality of God's existence and sense knowledge assures that other selves and things exist when we experience them.

### Discussion

For Locke sovereignty is placed under the human hands—a legislature, though supreme not absolute. It is held as trust- only as a judiciary power- and if found contrary to trust reposed in them then rebellion is justified..., and not only external but also internal throwing out..., altering them is permitted. Opposed to Hobbes- held to be absolute.

### Berkley

He gives a new theory of vision. His famous dictum is 'to be is to be perceived'. Knowledge depends on actual vision or other sensory experience. Quality of material objects are seen to the measure of the faculty of our vision is capable of seeing. We perceive objects- contemplating our own ideas and no abstraction is involved in it.

There is no other reality other than sensible world. Matter and corporal substance do not exist. Substance is a misleading inference of the philosophers. Gravity, causality is nothing but cluster of ideas our mind derives from sensation. The sensible world neither gives substance nor causality. Things external to our minds exist and achieve their order even when we do not perceive them.

Experience of material things is external to our mind, out of our mind ( not only mine but all ); then if it is independent of my mind then there should be some other mind wherein they exist ..., thus an inevitable omni-potent, omnipresent, eternal mind which knows and comprehends all things should exist.

Things depend on God for its existence- he is the cause of orderliness of things in nature. I realize that the other minds too have ideas like that of mine. There is a greater mind between the finite minds that co-ordinates all experience of finite minds –whose ideas constitute the regular order of nature. Our ideas come from God and His orderly arrangement of ideas is communicated to us. Objects are not caused by matter or substance but by Him- who is the ultimate reality. Even when we do not perceive, objects continue to exist due to His continuous perception.

There is special interpretation of causation- insight into it- for; causal connections are explained in terms of mental operations- which produce imagery ideas- through the mental power- thus every thing is nothing but the product of human minds. The real perceived ideas are created and caused to be in us by an infinite mind.

### Discussion

- His response to materialism and skepticism?
- Arguments for the reality of God and of spiritual beings –sufficient?

**Problem of Affirming God's  
Existence**

**Hume**

His rigorous premise that our ideas reach no further than our experience makes him skeptical about the traditionally held proofs especially those having recourse to Causality. Being an empiricist he held that the existence of God not be proved on the basis of experience neither he is the subject of belief or faith. Human reason is incapable of apprehending the reality of God. Proofs are misleading and futile.

**Teleological Argument;**

There is system and organization, beauty and goodness and so god's existence, intelligence and goodness is thus proved.

- A) Argument from analogy is futile. Things such as heat, cold and gravitation etc., cannot be explained on the basis of thought or reason. Laws of human life differ from that of animal life and the purpose one discovers in human life cannot be imposed upon other forms of existence- so better not to deduce the fact of the existence of God from the fact of universal existence.
- B) Whole- not the basis of part; Thought, reason and purpose are only part of creation- don't use it to analyze the entire creation. Human world and natural world are different and one cannot be used to deduce the other.
- C) God doesn't resemble Human mind. Man's mind is subject to incessant change and to conceive of God as being similar to the human mind is rather fallacious.
- D) Nature of God derived from nature of creation. Creation is not perfect and so logical conclusion would be that God too is imperfect. Nature as the basis of comparison would lead us to conceive of God who cannot satisfy us.

**Refutation of God as the Author of the Universe**

We cannot prove the accuracy of beliefs on the basis of our experience because it is limited and imperfect. Better to desist from conceiving god as the creator of mechanical instrument. God as the soul of the universe would better suffice us.

**Moral Arguments Revised**

God as the cause of all morality not assumed since it is not out of experience. Our experience does not vouch for any moral order in the universe. It is wrong to assume that God is moral even though man's reason is incapable of realizing this fact.

**Ontological Argument Revised**

When we do not know the nature of god, we can not argue about his existence on the basis of this nature. The belief in God arises rather out of man's physical and psychological needs- not to be based on human reason or on experience but on the requirement of human life- on human emotion and will.. It should be analyzed not from the rational standpoint but from the historic and genetic viewpoints- considering evolutionary aspects.

## Discussion

- Inconsistency in believing in the existence of God.
- Daringly believing in the 'purpose in everything', and in nature
- Having recourse to faith...in the philosophical circle
- His influence on Feurbach who develops new findings such as 'theogenic wish' and 'contrast-effect' [God-man relationship] is seen.

---

## 3.4 IDEALISM

---

### Kant's Idea of God

An idealist, profounder of critical philosophy Kant argues that all types of proofs are fallacious. The ontological arguments fail because it treats existence as if it were a 'real predicate' - not as a concept but certain determinations in them accounts for certainty- and need of a perfect being, that accounts for the possibility of any thing to exist. Causal argument fails for just to avoid an actually an infinite causal series in the world we posit a first cause- necessary being - God.

God is the highest idea, the idea of highest unity, of the one absolute whole including and encompassing every thing. This idea transcends experience, and it is one of the results of reason which brings under one head all happenings. The impossibility of experience of whole universe makes this idea an entity of this whole, personified as God.

Along with this idea over reason and God, Kant places thought over religion and nature, i.e. the idea of religion being natural or naturalistic. Kant saw reason as natural, and as some part of Christianity is based on reason and morality, he concludes that Christianity is 'natural'. However, it is not 'naturalistic' in the sense that religion does include supernatural or transcendent belief. Yes we can not experience God through reason yet reason can bring God back as a necessary unknown. Using the name of god one must live a good moral life-for bad life will bring evil.

Kant found the practical necessity for a belief in God. It's relation of happiness with morality as the "ideal of the supreme good" is clear. The foundation of this connection is an intelligible moral world, and "is necessary from the practical point of view". He says that only the idea of freedom accounts for the condition of the moral law, whose reality is an axiom. Thus the categorical imperative, authenticates God's role- also an immediately experienced moral situation requires Him, serving as foundation for our ethical principles. Voltaire's contention "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him" becomes true in Kant's statement.

Religion does counterfeit service to God- encouraging external ritual, superstition and hierarchy. Conscientious adherence to the principle of moral rightness in the choice of one's actions is to be the goal. Rejection of the possibility of theoretical proofs and his philosophical re-interpretation makes Kant as thoroughly hostile to religion in general and Christianity in particular.

### **Discussion**

- The neutrality in the God-talk and over-emphasis of practicality of morality!
- Philosophical speculation lacking in his discourse on Evil.
- Un-due optimism on 'the good-will' of man and the unrealistic refuge sought in the so called 'categorical imperatives'.

### **Hegel**

Philosophy has to do with 'Ideas' not mere concepts as Hegel proposed, finds its way throughout his doctrine. Religion for him is the attainment of this 'Absolute Idea'. The emphasis is more on Christianity which synthesises the divine and human in the God-man Jesus Christ.

### **Definition of Spirit and Light Referring to God**

Spirit- the absolute being, self-consciousness, the all truth and knows all reality as itself-in contrast to the reality- is compared to the darkness and night- as the pure ego. This object is for the ego, the fusion of all thought and all reality-the mode is the pure all-containing, all suffusing light as it rises. Its counterpart is the equally simple negative, darkness. The state of mere being has an unreal by-play on this substance. Its determinations are merely attributes, which do not succeed in attaining independence. This one is clothed with the manifold powers of existence with the shapes of reality. Pure light scatters its simplicity as infinity of separate forms and presents itself as an offering to self-existence that the individual may be sustained in its substance.

### **Plants and Animals as Objects of Religion**

Self-conscious spirit, passing away from abstract, formless essence and going into itself, makes it simple unity assumes the character of the manifold of entities existing by themselves; - divides into plurality of weaker and stronger, richer and poorer spirits. The innocence, characterizes the flower and plant- and as a sort of anti- thesis, negative quality causes dispersion of passive plant forms into manifold entities- and antipathetic fold spirits fight and hate each other to the death and consciously accept certain specific forms of animals as their essential reality.

### **The Representation of God**

Artistic spirit achieves consciousness which is immediate in character. The environment and habitation abstains its pure form, the form belonging to spirit, by the whole being raised into the sphere of the pure conceptions. Ends are not merely posited but constitute the individuality, first of the Gods and then of men. Religion assures man that his God is the universal end, who is present to his consciousness as a form of representation of his own. The ancient Gods, earth, ocean and sun, picturized as earlier titans, are the spirits reflecting ethical life of self conscious nation. The restless, endless individuality is destroyed causing isolation- imposed grandeur on the Gods, the substance being relegated. The supposed reality ensures gladness; it is worshiped and endured. Each marble God stands for the ethical life of a particular people, in worshiping its God, the community achieves self-consciousness.



Discussion

- Christianized the ideas of spirit, nature and freedom
- Pantheistic world-view, identifying nature with God.
- Forcing man to adhere to the universal end.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Define the terminologies ‘spirit’ and ‘light’ in Hegel.

2) Explain God’s manifold manifestation in plants and animals.

3) The representation of God in individual consciousness, anthropomorphized in ancient gods partially alienates yet serves in achieving self-consciousness – how?

3.5 LET US SUM UP

The dualism of Descartes, the monism of Spinoza and a different kind of pluralism in Leibniz believing in one substance but accepting different kinds of monads are covered. The emphasis is on the capacity of human mind on innate ideas or on self evident truths.

Stress on human experience supported with demonstrative reason in Lock, the greater mind coordinating our experience in Berkley, and historic and genetic roots revealing the belief in God arising out of physical and psychological needs in Hume are analyzed.

37

‘The idea of God’ in Kant serving as the foundation of our ethical principles, stemming from moral situation and Hegel seeing God as absolute spirit, manifesting in plants and animals- his representation seen in individual consciousness portrayed in ancient Gods mirroring ethical life and facilitating the process of attaining self-consciousness are also seen.

---

**3.6 KEY WORDS**

---

<b>Innate idea of God</b>	: by nature man has inborn potency to form the idea of god with in – while activating this one is led to belief in him.
<b>Emanation</b>	: Something flows out of something – God makes something out of Himself.
<b>Demonstrative reason</b>	: something more than intuitive knowledge- mind progresses from simple ideas to greater and higher ones and has agreement or disagreement of it. This is the mode of perceiving the eternal being.
<b>Teleological</b>	: theory which explains that everything has some purpose, goal or end.
<b>Historical and genetic view point:</b>	the need of God arising from man’s physical and psychological needs- since religion too involves evolution.
<b>Representation</b>	: something becoming available to man on behalf of some other reality- God presents himself to man’s consciousness, indeed a replica of His own.
<b>Categorical Imperatives</b>	: the basic ethical principle present in man a-priory, which accounts for the ‘good will’ – motivates man to will and act so as to posit a ‘maxim’ form his acts.

---

**3.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES**

---

Darrel E. Christensen. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. Vol. I, 1970.

J.N. Findlay. *Hegel a Re-examination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Roy Archana. *Western Philosophy*. New Delhi: Gitanjali publishing house, 1985.

Copleston Fredric.S.J. *A History of Philosophy*. New York: Image Books, 1960.

Britannica Great books 31, 33.

Edward, Paul. Ed. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol 4. 1967; Rpt. New York: Macmillan Publishing co., Inc., 1972.

Hunnex, Milton.D. *Chronological and Thematic charts of Philosophies and philosophers*. Oxford: Chandler Publishing Co., 1968.

Modern Arguments for  
God's Existence

Popkin, Richard H, Avrum Stroll. *Philosophy*. Oxford: Butterworth- Heinemann Ltd.,1993.

Vatsayan. *History of Western Philosophy*. Meerut: Kedarnath Ramnath, 1970.

---

## 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) **Substance** is the primary determination. 'Substance is one, which requires nothing else other than itself in order to exist.' God is the substance which is infinite, independent, all knowing, all powerful, creatures too can be called substance in as much as they depend on god.

**Accident** adds quality to the primary substance which is a secondary determination. For e.g. I am fat or intelligent man which adds quality to me as a man.

**Innate ideas:** By nature we have innate potentiality from birth, to form the idea of God. The idea of infinite substance should have proceeded from an existing infinite substance. We see that there is more reality in infinite than in finite substance. God is defined as substance. The idea of god is thus At Intra - from within. The Innate ideas go along with the external world. Defining the innate ideas vindication for the proof of God's existence is sought in Descartes.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) **Spirit-** the absolute being, self-consciousness, the all truth and knows all reality as itself-in contrast to the reality- is compared to the darkness and night- as the pure ego. This object is for the ego, the fusion of all thought and all reality-the mode is the pure all-containing, all suffusing light as it rises. Its counterpart is the equally simple negative, darkness. This one is clothed with the manifold powers of existence with the shapes of reality. Pure light scatters its simplicity as infinity of separate forms and presents itself as an offering to self-existence that the individual may be sustained in its substance.
- 2) Self-conscious spirit, passing away from abstract, formless essence and going into itself, makes its simple unity, assumes the character of the manifold nature of entities existing by themselves- divides into plurality of weaker and stronger, richer and poorer spirits. The innocence, characterizes the flower and plant- and as a sort of anti- thesis, negative quality causes dispersion of passive plant forms into manifold entities- and antipathetic fold spirits fight and hate each other to the death and consciously accept certain specific forms of animals as their essential reality.
- 3) Artistic spirit achieves consciousness which is immediate in character. The environment and habitation abstains its pure form, the form belonging to

**Problem of Affirming God's  
Existence**

spirit, by the whole being raised into the sphere of the pure conceptions. Ends are not merely posited but constitute the individuality, first of the Gods and then of men. Religion assures man that his God is the universal end, who is present to his consciousness as a form of representation of his own.

The ancient Gods, earth, ocean and sun, picturerized as earlier titans, are the spirits reflecting ethical life of self conscious nation. The restless, endless individuality is destroyed causing isolation- imposed grandeur on the Gods, the substance being relegated. The supposed reality ensures gladness; it is worshiped and endured. Each marble God stands for the ethical life of a particular people, in worshiping its God, the community achieves self-consciousness.