

## Lecture 13 – Classical Proofs for God’s Existence (cont.)

“And God spoke all these words: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.’” Exodus 20:1-2

### Key Terms

“Analogy of being,” classical theism, ontology, motion, causation, contingency, morality, design

### Objectives

- \*Identify and describe major arguments for the existence of God from the Western tradition.
- \*Evaluate these arguments.
- \*Consider helpful aspects of these arguments in various contexts.

### Classical Proofs for God’s Existence (cont.)

First, Dr. Williams offers his view on the analogy of being.

#### III. Arguments for the Existence of God

Thomas Aquinas’ five ways, *Summa Theologica* (13th century)

Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogian* (11th century)

##### A. The ontological argument (Anselm)

1. God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.
2. Further: Than that which nothing greater can be conceived must exist both in reality and in thought since the reality of a thing is necessarily more perfect than the mere idea of it.
3. Guanilo’s criticism

##### B. Aquinas’ five ways

1. The argument from MOTION (a cosmological argument)
  - a. Rest is the natural order of things. Movement is caused.
  - b. Things do not move themselves, but must be moved.
  - c. There must be a single or original mover.
  - d. The original mover is itself unmoved.
  - e. God is the Unmoved Mover.
2. The argument from CAUSATION (a cosmological argument)
  - a. Every effect has a cause.
  - b. The principle of sufficient reason states that a cause must be at least as great as its effect.
  - c. The universe cannot be uncaused since it has no internal principle of causation.
  - d. God is the First Cause.
3. The argument from CONTINGENCY (a cosmological argument)
  - a. The world contains creatures which do not exist necessarily.
  - b. God is a Necessary Being.
4. The argument from MORALITY (the moral argument)
  - a. Moral sentiment is universal to human life.
  - b. Moral values cannot be derived from the material world (sufficient reason).
  - c. God is the source of all value, the Greatest Good.
5. The argument from DESIGN (the teleological argument)
  - a. Voltaire: the watchmaker argument

## b. Aquinas

- 1) Things serve ends beyond their own devising.
- 2) The purposefulness of creation implies a purposer.
- 3) God is the Designer of the universe.

*“No one can deny that the universe seems to be designed; the instances of purposive ordering are all around us. Almost anywhere can be found features of being that show the universe to be basically friendly to life, mind, personality, and values. Life itself is a cosmic function—that is, a very complex arrangement of things both terrestrial and extraterrestrial must obtain before life can subsist. The earth must be just the right size, its rotation must be just right, its distance from the sun must be within certain limits, its tilt must be correct to cause the seasons, its land-water ratio must be a delicate balance. Our biological structure is very fragile. A little too much heat or cold and we die. We need light, but not too much ultraviolet. We need heat, but not too much infrared. We live just beneath an air screen shielding us from millions of missiles every day. We live just ten miles above a rock screen that shields us from the terrible heat under our feet. Who created all these screens and shields that make our earthly existence possible? Once again we are faced with a choice. Either the universe was designed or it developed all these features by chance. The cosmos is either a plan or an accident.” A.J. Hoover*

## IV. Assessment

A. Not meant as proofs so much as rational explanations of belief

B. As proofs, Aquinas’ five ways fail badly.

1. Each assumes that which it seeks to prove.
2. Why assume a single cause, mover, etc?
3. Why not an infinite regression of causes?
4. They fail to show continuing existence.
5. None leads necessarily to the God of biblical revelation.

C. Counting the cost

1. The deistic trajectory of natural theology
2. John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*  
*“Reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident truth, that there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing being.”*
3. Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation*