



# CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

eISSN: 2660-6828 | Volume: 03 Issue: 08 Aug 2022  
<https://cajpc.centralasianstudies.org>

## God Existence: Deductive and Inductive Arguments

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*Received 19<sup>th</sup> Jun 2022, Accepted 15<sup>th</sup> Jul 2022, Online 8<sup>th</sup> Aug 2022*

### ABSTRACT

The question of whether God exists has been the focus of discussions since the times immemorial. Numerous arguments have been provided by both sides of the discussion, each being rather impressive and logically coherent. In the text under analysis, both deductive and inductive reasoning is used to prove that God does not exist. For instance, the author uses an inductive line of reasoning quite successfully to prove their point. Particularly, the inductive argument is constructed by claiming that the life on Earth does not seem to be sustained by the presence of God. Therefore, God does not exist. To be more accurate, the author of the analysis points to the fact that people act in the way that does not imply that God exists. The pain that they inflict upon each other does not suggest that God is omnipotent and benevolent. Therefore, the author comes to the conclusion that God as a benevolent and omnipotent being as He is described in the Bible cannot possibly be a reality. Hence, using the principles of inductive reasoning, the author infers that God does not exist. The specified argument is partially in line with the STAR criteria. For instance, it is quite accurate and relevant since it uses the available evidence extensively and applies mostly recent information. However, the sufficiency of the analysis is questionable since the author does not embrace the concept of pain from a spiritual and Biblical perspective. Similarly, some of the information concerning the fact that the human race is doomed may be not quite typical. Therefore, some of the elements of the argument may be regarded as lacking consistency. Thus, the induction seems not quite strong, yet moderate. Hence, the argument is both considerably persuasive yet open to critique.

**KEYWORDS:** God, existence, deductive, inductive, arguments, discussions, benevolent, spiritual, earth.

### Introduction

The deductive reasoning used by Lewis is, in turn, quite convincing, yet it may have its flaws. The premise is that not all creatures are happy; particularly, not all people are happy. Quite on the contrary, a lot of people are in pain and, therefore, experience considerable suffering. If people are suffering and in pain, God does not have the omnipotence and benevolence that are typically attributed to Him. Therefore, He does not exist as the concept of the omnipotent and benevolent being as He is described in the Bible. The argument is quite persuasive and straightforward, yet it is also open to critique. For instance, it does not disprove the presence of God directly; instead, it points to the fact that He might not have the omnipotence and powers that are usually used to describe Him. However, the argument may imply that God exists as a being that possesses other powers, or that the current concept of God is erroneous. Thus, the argument opens possibilities for refuting it. The deduction meets the

standards of the formal logic since it follows the standard valid logical form. The premises are true, and the argument seems sound.[1,2]

It seems that the first argument is more convincing than the second one. Although each of the statements has its flaws, the second one leaves no opportunities for generalizing the main statement. As a result, it becomes rather flat. The first argument, however, is much more generic. Being based on observations and specifying that commonplace phenomena are utilized for the analysis, it makes certain errors in assumptions more forgivable. As a result, the overall message of the argument becomes considerably stronger. The identified outcome is quite surprising seeing that each of the assumptions under analysis is aimed to prove the same idea and uses roughly the same tools to do so.

The Ontological Argument is a type of thinking known as DEDUCTIVE REASONING. Deductive reasoning starts with incontrovertible premises and draws valid conclusions from them. In particular, the Ontological Argument focuses on the definition of God (a definition even atheists would accept) and draws logical conclusions from this (that a Being with this definition cannot be non-existent).[3,4]

Deductive reasoning focuses on how the conclusions of the argument are reached - it's validity. If reasoning is deductive, then its conclusions are valid if the premises are sound.

A deductive argument is one where the conclusion follows from the premises necessarily – if the premises are true then the conclusion must follow. For example:

P1. A bachelor is an unmarried man

P2. Finlay is an unmarried man

C. Therefore, it can be deduced that Finlay is a bachelor

So long as P1 and P2 are correct then the conclusion (C) must necessarily follow. The validity of a deductive argument depends upon its logic: if the premises are true then the conclusion follows as a logical necessity and it's irrational to disagree.[5,6]

### Discussion

So is the Ontological Argument like a logical proof? Is it a piece of deductive reasoning?

Anselm's first form of the argument is like this:

P1. God is the greatest possible being (nothing greater can be conceived)

P2 God exists only in the imagination

P3. If God exists in the mind alone, then a greater being could exist in the mind AND in reality

C1. This being would then be greater than God

P4. Either P1 or P2 must be false, but P1 cannot be false, so P2 must be false instead.

C2. Therefore, God exists both in the mind AND in reality.

P1 derives from the classical attributes of God (omnipotence, omnipresent, omniscience, etc). For Anselm (and most theists) this understanding of God is axiomatic (part of God's definition, part of what the word 'God' means). Any other definition of God would not be God.[7,8]

P3 argues that something that exists in reality is better than something that exists only in the imagination. For example, which is better - imagining that you have £1 million, or actually having £1 million? I'd rather have an actual million pounds!

The first conclusion (C1) is unacceptable, because it contradicts the definition of God in P1. So something has to "give" - either P1 must be changed or P2 must be false. You can't go changing the definition of God just because you don't like the conclusion it leads to, so P2 has to go.

The conclusion (C2) follows from the premises (P1,P3 and P4). If they are true then God must exist.

The Ontological Argument "unpacks" the definition of God. The FACT of God's existence is contained in God's ESSENCE. Imagining a non-existent God is as contradictory and illogical as imagining a triangle without 3 sides (an analogy Descartes went on to make).[9,10]

It's one thing to imagine God, but another thing to prove he exists. You can't move from definitions to reality. If the Ontological Argument looks like it proves something about the real world, then it must be making a logical mistake or confusing the definition of God, existence or perfection.

The argument is based on agreed premises. The definition of God as "the most perfect being imaginable" or "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" ties in with religious experiences and with the presentation of God in the Bible (eg Job 38-41). This argument produces deductive certainty, which is the faith that moves mountains (Matthew 17: 20).

Faith should be based on evidence, not definitions. David Hume said, "A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence." A persuasive deductive argument should be based on what we observe the world to be like, not on the meaning of words. Richard Dawkins calls it "logomachist trickery" - 'logomachist' means arguing for the sake of arguing.[11,12]

## Results

Many philosophers have attempted to prove the existence of God, although there is no argument as yet which proves without any doubt that God exists. A proof is the demonstration that something is true or, in this case, that God exists. There are 3 types of proof; direct, deductive, and inductive. A direct proof is when something is immediately obvious, so therefore, it cannot be used to prove God's existence. However, Inductive and Deductive Arguments could be used to prove the existence of God.

An Inductive argument is a posteriori (based on experience) which is logic involving reasoning from effect to cause. Inductive arguments attempt to create and support a general conclusion based on some evidence (either physical or based on experience), without making it absolutely certain. The arguments cannot produce proofs that completely remove an element of doubt from the conclusion, so the conclusion does not follow the premises and therefore, certainty can no longer apply - Probability is used instead. Analogy can be used as a proof, e.g. Paley's watch in the Design Argument. Using Inductive arguments, it is possible to prove things, although the induction never leads to certainty.[13,14]

Many philosophers have attempted to prove the existence of God using Inductive Arguments. One example is the Cosmological Argument, which uses the idea of Motion and Cause. Thomas Aquinas stated 'everything that happens has a cause' and believed that the existence of the Universe stands in need of explanation, and the only adequate explanation of its existence is that it was created by God. The argument is set out like so:

Everything that exists has a cause of its existence.

The universe exists.

Therefore:

The universe has a cause of its existence.

If the universe has a cause of its existence, then that cause is God.

Therefore:

God exists.[15,16]

### **Implications**

The Teleological Argument, or Design Argument attempts to prove the existence of God by way of the nature, beauty and order of the world. To say the world is ‘ordered’ is to mean that it is ordered towards some end or purpose. The suggestion is that it is more plausible to suppose that the universe is so because it was created by an intelligent being in order to accomplish that purpose than it is to suppose that it is this way by chance.

These arguments were notably criticised by David Hume, who said that using an analogy can anthropomorphosise God – make him similar to humans, and also questioned why a benevolent creator who designed the world would create evil too?

The aim of these arguments is to show that God’s existence is a reasonable conclusion, and is probable rather than necessary. E.g. God is seen as a desirable explanation for motion and cause. Individually, these arguments have been criticised, but F.R Tennant has argued that the arguments have a cumulative effect – together they form a stronger case for the existence of God. Tennant used 5 arguments to prove the existence of God.[17,18] These were:

Thought corresponds the world – could have been completely chaotic

Wildlife adapts (evolution)

World is surprisingly well suited for life – perfect conditions for survival

Beauty (Aesthetic argument)

Morality

It has been argued whether any of these points prove God’s existence, as there are usually alternative explanations. A criticism of the cumulative effect is that the arguments may not necessarily prove to be stronger when used together as they all still have flaws, and if they have little impact alone, why would they have greater impact together? This approach can leave you with the ‘God of Philosophers’ rather than the ‘God of Religious Belief’.

Swinburne is said to have the humility to not seek absolute proof. His goal is to collect several weaker arguments (similar to the Cumulative effect) in order to prove that the existence of God is more probable than not. He has identified two different types of Inductive argument – P-inductive argument which makes the conclusion more probable than not, and C-inductive argument which uses even weaker arguments in order to make a more probable conclusion. Swinburne wants to accumulate a sufficient quantity of C-inductive arguments for theism, each of which will offer some support to his hypothesis, so that they will collectively

constitute a good P-inductive argument, thus making the probability of the god hypothesis greater than one half. Whether he succeeds in achieving this is another matter.[17]

Deductive arguments are a priori – involving reasoning from effect to cause, and are arguments which make the conclusions certain, as long as the premises are accepted to be true. They are based on a series of assumptions, known as premises, and ‘if the premises are true, the conclusion must be true’ – this is known as a ‘valid argument’. Deductive arguments are limited to areas of logic and mathematics, and in order to prove something a logically valid is required. Rationality or ‘reason’ is an important idea in logic and mathematics. One of the key ideas to do with proof is ‘rationality’ – that a proof will convince any reasonable person. It is logically impossible to have true premises and a false conclusion using Deductive Arguments.

### Conclusions

The first, and best-known, Ontological Argument was proposed by St. Anselm of Canterbury in the 11th. century A.D. In his Proslogion, St. Anselm claims to derive the existence of God from the concept of a being than which no greater can be conceived. St. Anselm reasoned that, if such a being fails to exist, then a greater being — namely, a being than which no greater can be conceived, and which exists — can be conceived. But this would be absurd: nothing can be greater than a being than which no greater can be conceived. So a being than which no greater can be conceived — i.e., God — exists. [19] The argument could be summarized as follows:

1. Everyone has the idea of God
2. This idea of God is of the greatest possible being
3. God exists only in human minds or in reality
4. If God exists in human minds, He is not as great as a being that exists in reality
5. Therefore, God must exist in reality

However, it could be argued that the Ontological argument is not valid as it does not have true premises. Immanuel Kant argued that ‘existence is not a predicate’ – it isn’t a great making quality, and does not really ‘add’ anything to what is being described. This claim therefore means that the premise is false, making the conclusion false, and the argument invalid. Although the Ontological argument may not prove God’s existence it does give some pointers as to where a proof of his existence might lie.

It may be strange to find a proof of God’s existence based simply on what the word ‘God’ means, so it may not be possible to prove God’s existence deductively – some philosophers have said that it is not possible to prove anything deductively. Therefore, there is no deductive proof for God’s existence – some consider it to be an impossible task.

It has been argued that it does not matter whether God’s existence can be proven. The idea of Pascal’s wager is that a betting man would believe in God, because an atheist has more to lose (especially if God exists). Ockham’s razor (an idea which basically means ‘keep it simple’), would want God’s existence to either be proven or not so that we could ‘cut out’ any unnecessary belief, and deal with pure reality rather than ‘fantasy’. [18,19]

Kierkegaard was a famous anti-rationalist, who said that Christianity is self-contradictory, and we believe because of faith and not reason. Using the passion argument, he said that passion is an essential feature of faith, and if God’s existence is probable or proven, people would have less faith. Kant also said ‘I had to set

limits for knowledge in order to make place for faith'. Perhaps humans do not need to know everything, and therefore does it matter whether God's existence can be proven?

There seem to be problems when trying to prove the existence of God using Inductive or Deductive proofs. Inductive proofs are seen to have un-certain conclusions, whereas Deductive proofs need for certainty can mean they are impossible to use. It is difficult to gather evidence for God's existence, and it has been questioned whether we are able to talk about God at all because he is so different from human experiences. Proof may be impossible, due to so many difficulties with any particular proof and because of the assumptions we make in order to prove things. These assumptions are that human reason is reliable and that our language actually corresponds to the common world. If this is not the case, then how can anything be proven? But perhaps, using Kant's argument, proof is not needed for the existence of God, because faith is more important.[20]

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