

THE MEDIEVAL MIND

THE MEDIEVAL MIND

A PHILOSOPHY – THEOLOGY SYNTHESIS

A PHILOSOPHY – THEOLOGY SYNTHESIS



5th through the 13th centuries...



**Anselm, Abbot of Bec
Archbishop of Canterbury**

Philosophy Without Faith is Like a Ship Without Sails

Our Voyage Continues

THE MEDIEVAL MIND

CHRONOLOGY: 5th c. — 13th c.

GEOGRAPHY: Western Roman Empire, Europe, British Isles

To summarize several long-past centuries is impossible, especially a complex phenomenon such as the fusion of Christian, Greco-Roman and “Gothic” cultures that evolved into **EUROPE** over those intriguing centuries.

We will use the scholarly term to describe the **general WORLDVIEW** of this era:

“THE MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN SYNTHESIS”

Against the complex socio-political backdrop of:

The crumbling classical empire, the rise-to-power of the Roman Catholic Church, an illiterate population, and an agrarian Feudal Society (the first major culture NOT to have slavery as its economic base) ...

This Medieval Worldview was a brilliantly harmonious synthesis of:

The Aristotelian/Ptolemaic geocentric model for **physics**, Platonic and Neo-Platonic **Metaphysics**, and Christian **Theology** *...ALL under the increasingly powerful and eventually centralized **authority** of the Catholic hierarchy.

* Remember that “Christianity” by this era had *already* lost its Hebraic Roots (its full-orbed Biblical WV) and had devised doctrines and piled-up dogma upon the frameworks of Greek philosophy and Roman government.

One picturesque (or dramatic!) way to describe the **MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN SYNTHESIS** is this:

The God-made earth was center-stage for a grand human drama — The ‘Drama of Salvation or Damnation’! Salvation was preferable, of course...and was exclusively mediated by **Holy Mother Church** *via* its clerical hierarchy and its holy sacraments. You simply could *not* have God as Father *unless* you had Church as Mother.

EXTRA ECCLESIA NULLA SALUS

Outside the Church there is no Salvation.

~ St. Cyprian, On the Unity of the Church

You may try to characterize the **MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN SYNTHESIS** by evaluating some pros and cons:

+ + *Seen positively...*

It provided an orderly, cohesive worldview in very chaotic times. It gave mankind a sense of place.

It was an ingenious integration of Piety and Learning bringing *all* human knowledge to the service of the Holy Church. It had a cultural and intellectual UNITY mankind has not seen since! It was a marriage of Greek Philosophy and Christian Theology...of Faith & Reason with Faith taking priority. **Theism** was the dominant worldview. Right? **Or,**

– – *Seen negatively...*

It was a Christianized totalitarianism led by often corrupt and immoral clergymen who perpetuated an unbiblical and ‘extra-Biblical’ Theology thus ruthlessly enforcing, not true unity, but UNIFORMITY under the *wrong* (certainly not infallible) authorities...Greek Metaphysics, Geocentric Physics, Church Canon Law, Self-Righteous Dogmatism, and the pompous Roman Papacy fanatically assisted by the merciless Inquisition! Yoiks.

Our key academic task is to learn from their struggles. The most stellar Medieval Minds tried to reconcile Biblical Revelation with the best of Classical Wisdom. Obviously, due to their obsession with **God, the Soul and the Afterlife**, there are ‘**WORLDVIEW**’ & ‘**BIBLICAL STUDIES**’ CONNECTIONS aplenty in this unit!

Even in this Church-dominated era, where lines between power politics and institutionalized religion were blurry, our majestic and illuminating story of **PHILOSOPHY** continues apace.



The candle was not extinguished...it just flickered in far-flung monasteries for a while!

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN MEDIEVAL MINDS

FAITH AND REASON AND THE PROBLEM OF UNIVERSALS

FAITH AND REASON:

Reason was employed as luminously as ever, but generally it was used to serve **Faith**. In fact, *most* things (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, law, and so on) were endeavors commissioned and given in obedient service to *the* “Faith.” In this our longest era, that would mean the **Roman Catholic** Faith. (Unless you’re talking about Jewish and Muslim faiths.) Not surprisingly, the great minds of this ‘God-fearing era’ were absorbed in integrating their ‘religious’ beliefs with ‘secular’ knowledge utilizing their formidable reasoning powers! Rather than denigrate this age, we can see it as a new zenith! They were *using* Philosophy (which to them meant *mostly* Plato and Aristotle!) to understand and explain sacred doctrine. That’s the luminosity of the **Medieval Christian Synthesis!**

Philosophy was *ancilla theologiae* (like a maidservant to Queen Theology!) said the best synthesizer of ‘m all, Aquinas.

A basic assumption was that faith and reason should complement one another. If ‘all truth is God’s truth’ shouldn’t what we know by **reason** always be compatible with what we accept by **faith**? *Ummm...*

If you think about it long enough, however, ‘tensions’ will throb! And questions arise:

Which comes first? How can they be held in balance? Does faith only ‘know’ God and Reason only know the world?

Is it legitimate to posit two distinct but valid types of Truth? Should Theology & Philosophy safely stay on separate tracks?

(Because it does seem like the most egregious **heresies** were spawned by **reasoning too much about revelation!**)

Can some truths be “grasped” only when one exercises faith? Can faith ‘enable’ fallen reason?

Even if you are sure that you *‘keep the faith’* foremost in your Christian Life...

For faith to be *spiritual* obedience, must it *totally* bypass the intellect? (Separation of Church and Mind!?)

Are some Biblical beliefs completely ‘*beyond* human reason’ and perhaps even *absurd*?!

Is God Himself too ineffably Transcendent to be contained by logic and explained by language?

(Then how do we ‘**know**’ we know Him? Inner Light? Ecstatic Vision? Mystical Union? ESP?)

The Existence of a God *worth having Faith in...* can that really be **PROVED via Reason**? [See: “PROOFS”]

How does *general revelation* relate to *special revelation*? Would that be the same relationship as *reason* to *faith*?

(How much *can* the human know about transcendent being—*God, Soul, Heaven*—using only senses and reason?)

☪ Perhaps we can take some inspiration from the following: ☪

☪ “Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.” ~ Augustine

☪ “Belief is nothing else than to think with assent.” ~ Augustine

Not everyone who thinks, believes...but everyone who believes, thinks! One does not reason *to* faith, one reasons *from* faith. But remember that to the Platonic-minded Augustine, ‘faith-knowledge’ meant a supra-rational insight or ‘inner-illuminating’ given by God to the pre-ordained!

☪ Like Augustine, Anselm prioritized faith: “I do not seek to understand that I may believe; I believe that I may understand.”
Credo ut intelligam

Thus his famously emblematic: *Fides quaerens intellectum* “**Faith Seeking Understanding.**” *℞* *Could that be our class motto?*

☪ “Reason in man is like God in the world...All that is true, by whomever it has been said, has its origins in the Spirit.” ~ Aquinas

☪ ‘God is above all knowledge...He cannot be grasped by reason or illumination, but only by faith.’ W. of Ockham might say.

☪ “Reason is our soul’s left hand. Faith our right. By these we reach divinity.” ~ John Donne

☪ “Faith and Reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth...” ~ Pope John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*

☪ “Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation.” ~ Elton Trueblood (included because I like it & I’m the teacher.)

For Extra Credit: ☒☒ Compile a list of quotes...then mark them as: “F”, “R” or “BB”! (Fideistic, Rationalist, or Balanced Biblical!)

To be fair, we’ll let Augustine have the last word: (As it honors the *Author of our Faith*, and since by now **you** are heavy laden!)

☪ “I have read in Plato and Cicero sayings that are wise and beautiful. But I have never read in either of them:

‘Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden.’”

FAITH AND REASON IN YOUR WORLDVIEW

As you can tell, this issue is vibrantly relevant in Theology, Worldview Studies, and the Philosophy of Religion. It also informs the Science & Religion Dialogue, *and* guides the variegated approaches to Christian Apologetics. *Hmm...* Were those luminous Medieval Minds onto something? Can we learn from their eloquent piety while avoiding their metaphysical misconceptions? We should try, because the ramifications of the “faith/reason” nexus are manifold and vital. *If* you are a Theist, you want to know what *and why* you do believe. And you want to be capable of articulate defense and compelling proclamation. And best of all, you want to adore the Lord your God more and more as you fathom His depths! If you fear that over-emphasis on *reason* will render *faith* into ‘too much head-knowledge and not enough heart-felt devotion,’ you are in good company. ♥ Many devout theologians have cautioned that it is better to love the triune God than to explain the trinity!” If you tend to agree, you are already involved *in* the dialogue! But don’t forget *to* dialogue! **Because** remember — real faith can *not* be severed from the rational process. Your personal commitment and trust in God is crucial of course. But you commit your entire self, *heart and mind*, when you trust God’s propositional revelation!

True faith is founded upon intelligible beliefs about the object of faith. ‘Faith’ can be and must be intelligible!

Believers and unbelievers alike assert ‘truth claims’ about reality. They then put ‘faith’ in those assertions. Those claims must be subject to logical-critical analysis. Those assertions *and the WVs built on them* should **‘stand up to reason’!** We Theists even critique one another on a host of interpretive issues. That isn’t a bad thing...as long as we eschew pride.

To reflect intently on the ultimate ‘Object of Belief’ can be both intellectually invigorating and spiritually stimulating. Think of it as...obeying the commandment to love God with ALL we are. As we mature in Biblical faith, we want our personal trust deepened, our living witness empowered, *and* the coherent beauty of our worldview enhanced into **Hi-Def!**

Amen! BTW, this magnificent Hebrew word ‘AMEN’ comes from the same root as EMET and EMUNAH! Truth *and* Faith!

May I suggest that a more full-orbed **Hebraic WV**, *with* its own accompanying interpretive style, is indispensable here. It can handle the tensions that Greek-minded Christians have polarized and bickered over. It is a healthy corrective and a constant reminder that: knowledge means responsibility, reason has a Source, and faith is faith-full living, not mere assent to a catechism! That is why we need a **Judeo-Christian Biblical Theism**...because the ‘*Judeo*’ does enhance our ability to interpret the Bible (all the better to **live** it!) May we strive for a healthier balance between logic and love...reason and faith.

It is instructive to trace ‘Faith & Reason’ throughout the course of **history** *and* over the survey of **worldviews**. So here is an easy **QUIZ** which includes eras *and* WVs. Use these abbreviations:

H = Hellenistic Era **M** = Medieval Era **R&E** = Renaissance and Enlightenment Eras **19/20** = 19th and 20th centuries
T = Theism **D** = Deism **N** = Naturalism **Ni** = Nihilism **A X** = Atheistic Existentialism **T X** = Theistic Existentialism

1. ____ Should enjoy a healthy ‘tension’ between divine revelation and human reason...and be thankful for both!
2. ____ Darwin, Freud, Quantum Physics and World Wars detonated destructive blows to *both* faith *and* reason.
3. ____ “Philosophy is but a servile Handmaiden to Theology, Queen of all the Sciences.”
4. ____ Disdain objective reasoning! (Courageously put ‘faith’ in human subjectivity as creator of meaning.)
5. ____ During these exciting times, Reason began to *replace* Faith...and science to supersede ecclesiastical authority.
6. ____ No faith in God at all, but tremendous (and *unaccounted* for!) ‘faith’ in autonomous human reason.
7. ____ Let God-given Reason dictate what counts as Revelation...but discredit the miraculous as unreasonable!
8. ____ ‘Church Fathers’ and apologists used pagan philosophy to defend (but also at times, to define) ‘the Faith.’
9. ____ “Leap to Faith” in God, even if *irrational*, for the source of meaning is in the “**I — Thou**” relationship.
10. ____ Reason? No. Faith? No. They are both utterly useless...and everything is meaningless!

THE PERPLEXING PROBLEM OF UNIVERSALS

This is an ontological, epistemological, *and* a linguistic problem. It makes us wonder: To what do our words/terms actually refer? When we categorize lots of particular things into ‘wide and universal’ classes — are the classes themselves **real** (existing apart from the things) or are they mere **names** (which we assign arbitrarily)?

To **Realists**, universals are real. Abstract concepts are *necessary*, and even more real than the particulars.

To **Nominalists**, only particulars are real. And ‘universals’ are not...they exist only in our minds and speech.

Some medieval scholars opposed each other so much that they took rather extreme positions.

One radical nominalist said that universals are merely *breath!* (“*Flatus vocis*” ~ Roscelin)

The debate over universals could be sparked by asking: What is the connection between our abstract concepts *about* things and the actual particular things? Or — What does it **mean** that so many things bear a ‘family resemblance’ and share identifiable features? What gives unity to the parts? Conversely, what gives individuation to the whole?

These puzzlements were not devised by the scholastic mind. We have seen similar questions in every era, haven’t we?

“One vs. Many” (*Pre-Socratics*)

“Appearance vs. Reality” (*Sophists*)

The ‘in here or up there’ status of “Forms” (*Aristotle and Plato*)

The classic formulation of the question was from the Hellenistic Era, in a Neo-Platonist’s commentary on Aristotle.

He asked: “**Do genera and species exist only in the mind?**” (*Porphyry*, 232—305).

We use universal terms to name *all the members of a kind*. Fine. But, to WHAT do our terms actually point?

How do we **locate** a universal? Can we “**know**” this reality? Or, are universals *not* actually really really **real**!?

Medieval Minds divided into two, no...four, no...into ... “**as many ideas on the subject as there were heads!**”



So according to John of Salisbury (1115 — 1180) this should be a painfully heady and lengthy summary!

But no, let’s just mention the main camps:

Exaggerated Realism — **Universals**, like Forms, are real entities apart from (and even more real than) the **particulars** which ‘share’ in them. [Plato, Augustine, J. S. Eriugena, Anselm]

BUT... Where *are* these universals that are so ‘real’? How exactly do particulars ‘share’ in them if they aren’t right *here*?

This view leads to a Two-Tiered Reality (Platonic Dualism).

Moderate Realism — **Universals** exist, but not separately. They exist *IN* the **particulars**. Aristotle was the realist who ‘brought the forms down to this world.’ When we perceive something, we see THIS particular thing and we intuit the ‘form’ or WHAT the thing is. [Aristotle, John Duns Scotus, and Thomas Aquinas]

Aquinas restated the Aristotelian solution: Universals are neither separate Forms nor are they mere human thoughts. They are *IN* particular things ‘as their WHATNESS.’

BUT... How can we be sure our often faulty senses grasp the world accurately? How can we be sure that we correctly recognize the ‘whatness’ of things (what they really are?)

Mustn’t there still be some unifying substance that is *not* dependent on and embedded in matter?

Conceptualism — **Universals** name concepts in the mind. They neither exist mysteriously **out** there in another dimension nor **in** the things, but are formed in our **minds** as we observe resemblances among **particulars**. [Abelard]

BUT... Although this view seems like a good compromise between the Realists and Nominalists, it is a tad shaky. IF concepts *are* real, that reverts to the Realist’s position...and, if *we* just make them up, that concedes to Nominalism.

How do we know we conceptualize accurately? **How would we know?**

Eventually this view was brilliantly developed by **KANT**, who located concepts as “built-in” structures of the mind.

Nominalism — **Universals** exist in **name** only! Those “names” we apply to universally similar features of things are just that—names! Only **particulars** exist. [Boethius? (he was ambiguous, commented on Porphyry), William of Ockham]

BUT... This attributes too much power to individual minds. If particulars do not share something real, how would we know what to name what it is they share? Taken to an extreme, this leads to a Sophist-like *skepticism* about the meaningfulness of words. Knowledge would be subjective, not objective. Names are just linguistic conventions.

Are words unstable...arbitrary...symbols with nothing solid there to symbolize? *Hmmm...*

 **So, what do YOU think about Universals?** 

IF you are **perplexed** by the Problem, at least you are in good company. It obviously baffled some of the best minds in history!

IF you think the Problem was ‘miraculously’ **solved** by **Aquinas** and put to rest in Medieval Minds, you’ll be disappointed.

In fact, here are some *hints* for upcoming eras:

- ↪ Soon to come are **discoveries** and events that challenged *all* the positions! (On every question!) ❄
- ↪ **Ockham**’s empirical Nominalism is one reason we *move* to the next era! (He is a transitional figure.)
- ↪ By the **Enlightenment Era**, philosophers are *obsessed* with **epistemology** (how *do* we know what we know?)
- ↪ In the 20th c, egoist Ayn Rand *still* considered the Problem of Universals to be philosophy’s central issue.

IF you think the Problem of Universals is irrelevant today, think again. Why it even has **WV CONNECTIONS**: Our amazing ability to recognize “universality” (commonality of features, essences shared by many particulars) is related to our ability to *conceptualize*.

It lets us apprehend reality *coherently* rather than as an indigestible blitz of bits.

It makes *language* possible. It makes *knowledge* possible. *Science* inevitably talks in universals!

We could not have a **WORLDVIEW** without universals...but what manner of Being *have they*?

They seem fundamental. We all speak in ‘Universal-eze.’ Yet WHAT exactly are we referring TO?

❄ What *are* Universals?

What kind of existence has ‘Kind’?
Asked the quaint Medieval Mind
And how variously they opined:
Some said *separate*, some said the *reversal*
Re: the **Status of a Universal**
They have no location in space
Yet we see them all over the place!
Are they Up, Down or Middle?
(What a rummy kind of Riddle)
Whether *in re* or *ante rem*
It seems a *lot* depends on them
We might be left in frightful doubt
If *only* partic’lars are about
The problem has always been hard
(Well perhaps not for Abelard)
If Universals *really* possess an existence
Then how does each thingie derive its own “**thisness**”?
(What’s your explanation for individuation?)
Oh what’s the relation of instantiation?
Or is it *all* a mistaken **reification**?

Believe it or not, the ‘riddle’ is still hotly debated, and not just by philosophers. Nor is it merely theoretical. The question has serious practical implications for scientists, ethicists, physicians, sociologists, linguists, and a host of others. It is to ask about the status of many ‘essential things’ that may have independent, *or pardon the scary term* – **absolute** existence outside our subjective cognition. What about Number? Are the Laws of Physics real or are they hypothetical consensus reached by the scientific community? Do we discover them or devise them? Are human beings **HUMAN** in the sense of sharing a true essence-nature, beyond what we manipulate and manufacture? (Quite relevant in Bionics, Robotics, *Ai*, Eugenics, Life Support, “Right to Die” issues.) Finally, are there any fixed, stable meanings to our words? Do words reflect *or construct* reality? Are ‘universals’ real *or socially constructed*? You *know* what a postmodern would opine!

No, we haven’t seen the last of this riddle.

But now let’s amble down the **consecrated corridors** of our **History of Philosophy Hall o’ Fame**. 

As you know, in the medieval climate of ‘reason serving *the* faith’ the greatest thinkers were mostly Christians... ..Theology professors, monks & bishops even... **SAINTS** even! There are *hundreds* of radiant minds to study, but... We pause at the pedestals of only three stellar **mega-minds**. An ‘**A**-list’ of saints ...Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas:



SAINT AUGUSTINE (354–430)

After a riotously concupiscent youth and a circuitous spiritual journey that included Manichaeism, Academic Skepticism, and Neo-Platonism, Augustine was converted to Christianity. He came to ‘mother Church’ and brought his enormous intellect and rhetorical training with him...and oh yes, we *still* labor under the impact of his work.

He became a bishop during a turbulent time in Church History, and had to spend much of his career dealing with rivals, controversies, and even schisms. He wrote refutations against his former Manicheans. He developed an **Ecclesiology** in response to the Donatists, and a **Soteriology** contra Pelagius:

The Donatist issue was over the moral purity of clergy, thus over rightful ordination and then sacramental validity. You might have wanted to side with the schismatics! But against them, Augustine elevated the hierarchical Church over individual purity! The Imperial Church used brute force against the Donatists, and the African church was so weakened by the unhealed breach that it could not survive the Islamic invasion. Today, North Africa is Muslim.

The other battle was against ‘Pelagianism,’ the teachings of the brilliant moralistic monk Pelagius:

Pelagius *rejected* Augustine’s theory of Original Sin, and was *mortified* at his claim that no one could be chaste unless God gave chastity to them as a gift! He saw that such a view undermined responsibility. He never intended to teach a false Gospel; in fact the Eastern Orthodox Churches also rejected the idea of original sin. But Augustine was incensed and had Pelagius charged with heresy. Sadly, Augustine exaggerated his own views of human depravity, God’s Sovereignty and Irresistible Grace in what seems an obvious *over-reaction against* Pelagianism.


Many portraits of Augustine show him illumined by the Spirit, heart aflame, and with one foot trampling upon heresy! Some of his theories became **fixed** (ratified by later councils) into Christian Dogma. For example: Just War, Purgatory, Transubstantiation, Original Sin, Baptismal Grace enabling Salvation, Veneration of Mary, **Amillennialism**, and even ‘Inquisition’ (the right of the Church-State to persecute and torture non-Catholics ‘for their own good’!)

But the Catholic Church never entirely accepted his fatalistic view of Predestination. There were even 5th c. monastic reactions against Augustine’s monergistic view of salvation, fearing that such denigration of **free will** would actually undermine their mission work!

[**Monergism** is the *one*-sided view that in individual salvation and redemption history, it’s *all* God’s doing and humans are totally passive.]

His prolific writings addressed the tumults of his own day, set the philosophical agenda for the entire Medieval Era, and helped shape the contours of Christian Theology! That’s quite a career. Do not complain about term-papers, Augustine wrote 113 books, 218 letters, 500 sermons, and a unique *spiritual autobiography* that pondered questions no one ever had before! **Confessions** is a universal literary classic! Read chapter 11 on Time if you want your mind expanded!

In the 12th c., the scholarly Bishop Peter Lombard compiled a doctrinal-pedagogical text called the **Book of Sentences**. It contained quotations from the most prominent Church Fathers. By the 13th and for several more centuries, it was ‘Required Reading’ for a Theology degree! Citations from ‘*Guess Who?*’ comprise the bulk (**90%**) of the book.

 Talk about an Influence Trail! Our Dear Saint Augustine is certainly the *most* influential theologian of all time... Even having indelible impact on *Protestant Reformers* such as Martin Luther (an Augustinian Monk!) and John Calvin. **We** can’t possibly do justice to his passionate life, his inflamed genius, and his powerful voluminous writings, much less his far-reaching impact in one paltry overview.

But we will give him his deserved pedestal in our illustrious Hall of Fame.  For truly, St. Augustine did shine as...

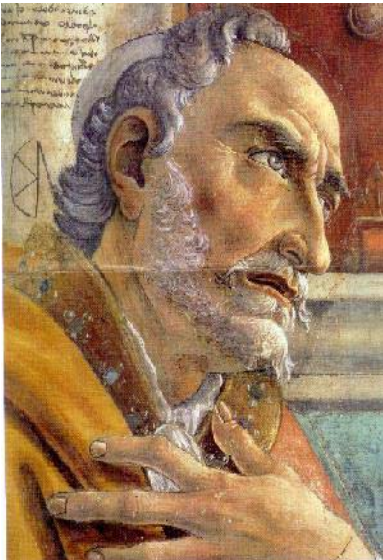
The last great Classical and the first great Medieval Mind!

AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, BISHOP OF HIPPO, NORTH AFRICA

354 – 430

“DOCTOR OF GRACE”

PORTRAIT GALLERY



It has been said that Augustine’s great **mind** launched Scholasticism and his devout **heart** launched Monasticism. Note that the one can become vain arid disputation and the other, vain mystical detachment! Thus...you see that we will always need a *balanced* Hebraic-Biblical WV to ‘restrain the vain’! (To curb our tendency toward excesses!)

But now we need to jump six hundred years ahead, to honor the real ‘patron saint’ of **SCHOLASTICISM**. Before we do, please be sure you can define it, because it is *so* characteristic of Late Medieval Theology that it is synonymous with Medieval Philosophy! It is the crowning achievement of their Faith & Reason synthesis. It fell to the Scholastics to *reconcile* Christian ‘Theism’ with Aristotelian ‘Naturalism.’

The term itself comes from the Latin- *scholasticus* - **to take time for study**...from which we get our words school, scholar, scholastic. “You must take a *lot* of time to study if you aspire to being scholarly.”!!

You can remember what ‘Scholasticism’ means by thinking of it as: **Theology from the schools!**

Early in this era, such ‘scholarship’ dwelt in monasteries, later in Cathedral schools, and it reached its anthesis in the universities. Universities were, of course, “Christian” institutions ...with all curricula set and professors licensed by the Roman Catholic authorities.

Scholasticism is as famous for its **dialectical method** as for any content:

“Pose question, state objections, consult traditional authorities, apply logical proofs, and conclude, offer resolution.”

Thus, Scholastics used reason *dialectically* to resolve conflicting opinions on theological matters, but they also used it *devotionally* to penetrate revealed truths and probe divine mysteries!

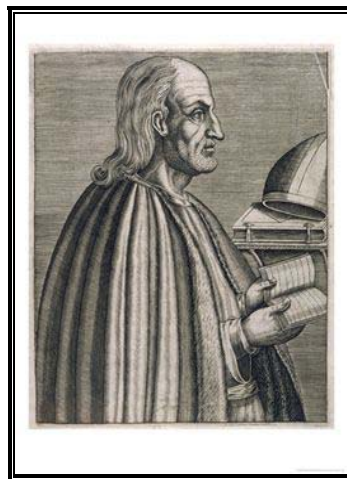
This endeavor might seem too academic a way to treat spiritual matters, but the best among them sincerely meant to **prove** God’s Word, **ponder** God’s Nature, and maybe even **praise** His Majesty!

Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, is a marvelous exemplar.

SAINT ANSELM (1033 – 1109)

He not only had a stormy career as a monk-*become*-archbishop, he also wrote influential discourses on: *why* God became man, on *why* the devil fell, and other ‘mysteries’ of faith. When he was on his deathbed, he prayed to live long enough to solve the mystery of— the Origin of the Soul (which he feared no one would be able to solve after his death!)

His place in the ‘Hall of Fame’ may be as the first theologian to discuss basic Christian beliefs using *only* logical reasoning, with *no* appeal to revelation. He was even rebuked by one of his teachers for writing entire theological treatises *without* even quoting from Scripture! Although deeply influenced by Greek rationalism, Anselm seems to have had courageous character and a pious personality. Many of his writings are in *dialogue-with-students* form and show fatherly concern for their fretful questions!

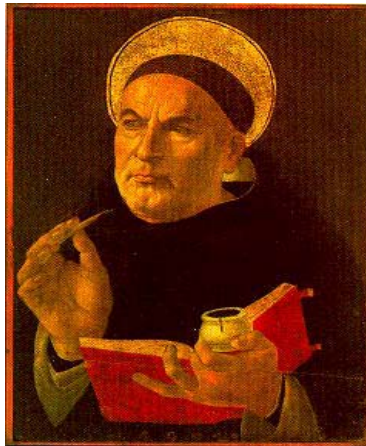
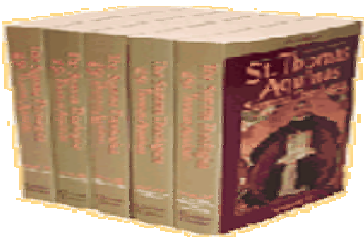


His most famous work is a profound meditation that dares probe into **God’s very *Be-ing***. This contemplation is called the ***Proslogion*** (Discourse). Merely a few pages long, the writing has had reams and reams written *about* it! Why? Because it contains an alleged ‘**fool-proof**’ formula of God’s ‘Necessary Existence’! Think it through and tell me if it ‘*does anything for you*’! Or **to** you, as philosophy is *wont* to do! See “**Giving Proofs...**”

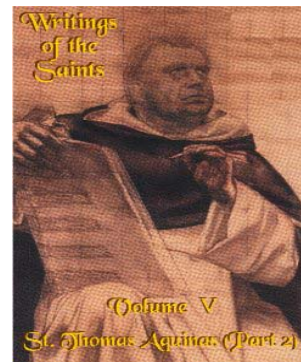
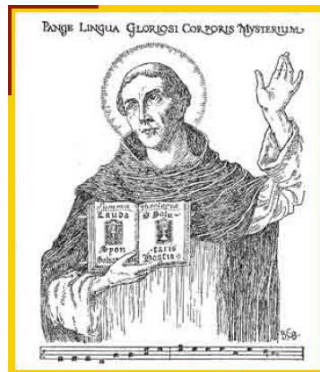
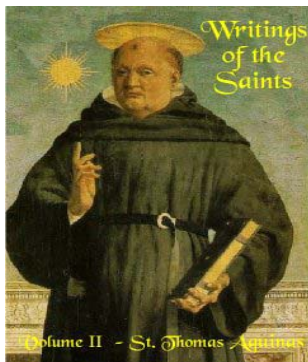
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS (1225—1274)

‘Should old Aquinas be forgot?’ Hardly. More doctoral dissertations have been written on him than any other philosopher. Catholic theologians are actually still called **Thomists** or Neo-Thomists. This saint was the ultimate synthesizer of Faith & Reason, including Plato’s rationalism *AND* the newly rediscovered works of Aristotle... which were first *banned* and then *reconciled*! (Earlier Medieval Scholars only had access to Aristotle’s Logic, *now* they had to deal with his Mighty Metaphysics!)

No wonder Thomas was the creator of the most comprehensive system of Christian Theology *ever* conceived!



He wrote about ‘everything there was’ *and* he could dictate manuscripts to several different secretaries at a time. This corpulent corpus includes about 100 different works, over 40 books (2 of which are encyclopedic in length!) and even some hymns. Compared to Thomas, Anselm wrote pamphlets!



When in 1323 someone challenged his “canonization as a **saint**” (saints, you know, are supposed to have performed a **miracle** or two!)...the Pope said that ‘every question Thomas answered in the *Summa Theologica* was a miracle’!

We will now proceed to discuss every single one of them. Just wanted to see if you are reading this.

Rather than see **philosophy** as using reason and senses to explore **Nature**...and **theology** as accepting **Revelation** so as to expound **Grace**...Aquinas saw a complex inter-relationship which we can call: **Natural Theology**.

Some truths of God can be known by reason and the senses.

Other truths are grasped only by accepting Revelation.

Now, have some fun discussing **which are which**!

What say...*Creatio ex nihilo*? Virgin Birth? Incarnation? The fully Divine – fully Human nature of Jesus? The Trinity? Or...How about God’s very **existence**?

Thomas’ argument from nature (the cosmos) demonstrates that *natural* theology can point ☞ to *revealed* theology. Your textbook only gives you an excerpt from the Five Ways, and it leaves out the preceding “objections” which make the Scholastic style so engaging...so dialectically delectable! **“Therefore”**...

Please do ‘take time’ to read them here, my scholars! 🎓 See: **“Giving Proofs of God’s Existence”**

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS “A CATHEDRAL OF THOUGHT”

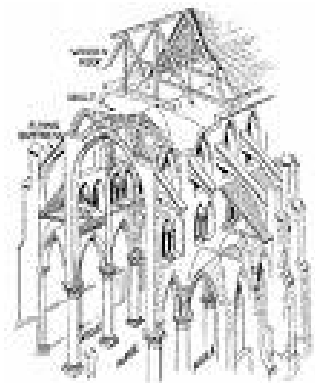
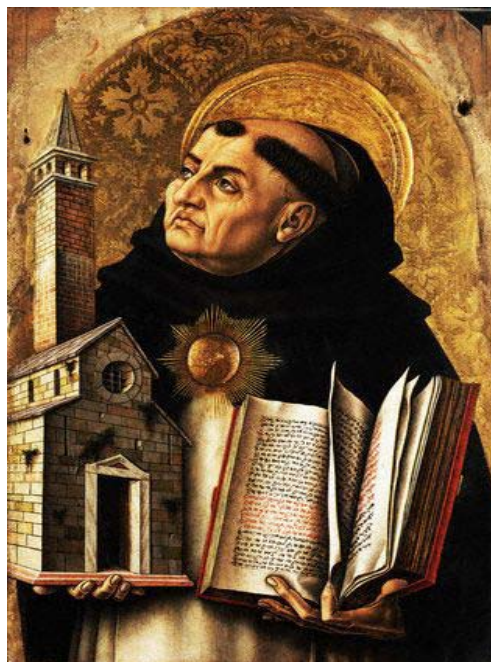


“(His) tremendously systematic works comprise a whole structure that has often been compared to the Gothic cathedrals... ..Like them, Thomas' work is not only a mirror help up to late medieval society but also a beacon unto it.”

From your textbook, p. 132 [Looking at Philosophy by Donald Palmer]

“The great theological-philosophical synthesis he attempted to construct like a massive medieval cathedral of ideas had at its very heart the altar of Christ's broken body and the grace of redemption found upon it. Getting to that altar past the flying buttresses and elaborate vestibules of Natural Theology is a task, and many never make it there. But for those who persevere, there can be no doubt that Aquinas—if not all scholastics—cared deeply about the mysteries of salvation and that it was for their sake that he wrote.”

~ Roger E. Olson (*The Story of Christian Theology*, IVP 1999)



GIVING PROOFS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Lively debates ensue over: whether **proofs** *can be* given, or *need to be* given, for the existence of God. But some consider the question of God's existence to be the *sine qua non* of the Faith and Reason nexus! Unless God does indeed **exist**, no other questions would seem worthy of these libraries full of theological philosophizing! The question is of 'ultimate' significance. Theists traditionally have offered 'rationales' for belief in a Supreme Being...and there are some classic lines-of-reasoning.

The types of arguments most well known or frequently marshaled are:

[Ontological, Cosmological, Teleological, Design, Moral, Religious-Experiential, Evidence from Miracles, Pascal's Wager]

It is better to speak of "sound arguments" and "valid inferences" rather than squabble about how "proof" should be defined and gum things up over what your opponent will accept as proofs. But don't worry, the things that can be scientifically "proven-beyond-doubt" are actually few. And those are exceptionally uninteresting! But if the answer to our Q1 (What is Ultimate Reality?) turns out to be: The Theistic God...it would be the most important assumption in your arsenal and the most interesting *fact* you have!

So let the arguments begin!!

ANSELM'S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

That than which no greater can be conceived!

Forget scientific evidence, go into a quiet room, clear your mind of extraneous data, think intensely and contemplate 'God's Being.' That way you can get into the true spirit of Anselmian reflection. You may want to begin and close with prayer:

"Teach me to seek thee, and reveal thyself to me...for I cannot seek thee except thou teach, nor find thee except thou reveal thyself." *Proslogion 1*

🕊 Remember that for the saintly Anselm, **faith** preceded and enhanced **reason**:

"I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe but I believe in order to understand." *Proslogion 1*

How wonderful to have such ardent belief and longing. But, Anselm also held **assumptions**. You can't really shed them, as we've seen. His were Platonic-Augustinian:

A. The lovelier, better, and closer to perfection something is (in other words, the **Greater** something is)...the **more Real** it is. And something that exists (has reality) is obviously greater than something that does not exist. **B.** The '**idea**' of highest possible existence *is intelligible* (so you should be able to follow all this!) **C.** A certain 'logical necessity' (*ontological* necessity, too!) *does* have bearing on existence. (So we're allowed to speak of existence in terms of necessity. "MUST-BE-ness")

Not everyone would allow those assumptions under the door, but we'll see what he does with them. In fact, if you think about his assumptions for a moment you'll probably predict how his 'argument' will run! You expect that it will be *conceptual*, and you are right. He'll reason purely **a priori** from the concept of **Being**, adding no input from the senses, which he distrusted.

He starts with a definition, defining the concept of God. Think, *what do we mean* when we use that unsurpassable word?

God is a Being "that than which no greater can be conceived." Strange wording, but it makes this point:

God isn't just *our* biggest idea; He is **THE** biggest idea possible. In fact, that's what we all *mean* when we say 'God.'

What a Concept! Anselm's argumentation has been delineated many different ways, but let's make it short and sweet.

1. If a "God" exists, such a being would have to be "T.T.W.N.G.C.B.C." or- **GCB** for short! (Greatest Conceivable Being)
 - ☛ **GCB** exists in our minds. We can *think it* so a **GCB** *is* a possible being...it exists at least as an idea!
2. It is better to exist **IN** reality than to exist **ONLY** in our minds.
 - ☛ A Being that existed *only* in our minds would not then **BE** the **GCB**!
3. The **GCB** must then exist **IN** reality. 🌩 Ergo, **GOD EXISTS**. Is anyone *Foolish* enough to try and refute that?!

Greatest Conceivable Being *means* '**God**' and if you can even conceive of such a being, it necessarily exists outside your thought to **BE** the greatest being! Right? You simply cannot conceive of God as **NON-existing**...as it is obviously better **to be** than **not to be**...see? You cannot deny God's existence any more than you can deny that $1 + 1 = 2$! Only a poor **fool** would deny God's existence. They'd be saying in effect: "**A Being who cannot be conceived of as not existing, does not exist!**" Or... "**A Being Who Must Exist, Can't Exist.**" Only a durn fool would blurt out such a blatant self-contradiction!

The fool totally refutes himself! If he is thinking about *God*, he cannot be thinking of a non-existent being, and if he *is* thinking about a being that doesn't exist — he cannot be thinking about God!

Dare a foil come forward and try to refute Anselm's argument *without* making a Fool of himself!? Bring it on, says Anselm.

Refutation: Our puny little pea-brains cannot conceive of the greatest conceivable being! (as per Gaunilon's objection)

Anselm: But surely we can! If we even understand the phrase, we have already conceived of the **GCB**.

Refutation: *Then* we should be able to 'conceive' of the Very Greatest *ANYTHING* at all...

I'll think of a Golden Mountain 🏔️ or a Paradisiacal Island 🏝️ and, \niesto \ni

It would then *have to exist* according to your argument. So your argument is reduced to an absurdity!

Anselm: No it isn't! The argument isn't about **real estate**, but **Reality!**

It doesn't work for just *any-ole-thing*, but maximal being, greatest **BE-ING**...

which by definition would be none other than **GOD!**

We don't think, '**most islandy islands**' but we *do* think of a hierarchy of being and some being must be at the top!

There is nothing *in* the definition of 'island' that implies absolute perfection...but Ultimate Being, by definition, *implies* Perfection and unsurpassable Greatness!!

The argument isn't absurd — it's irrefutable. It is "**foolproof**"! Praise God! And he does:

🙏 "I thank thee, gracious Lord, I thank thee; because what I formerly believed by thy bounty, I now so understand by thine illumination, that if I were unwilling to believe that thou dost exist, I should not be able to understand this to be true." *Proslogion 4*

🙏 ? COMMENTS:

The alleged force of Anselm's argument is: If we even utter the word God, we have conceived of the greatest Being, thus implying that the real **GCB** *must* exist (outside our puny minds.) God's Being is necessary being and that's that. Irrefutable.

🚗 The argument summed up in a bumper sticker: '*If ya know WHAT God is, ya know THAT God is!*' Forgive me, Anselm.

If **you** think God's existence is a self-evident truth... **St. Anselm** smiles upon you. 🙏😊

As you'd expect, Platonic-minded Realists and *a priori*-embracing Rationalists considered this argument to be profound.

Descartes (who will restate it in his own *Meditation!*), **Spinoza**, **Leibniz**, and even the pompous Herr **Hegel** liked it.

But the more Aristotelian-minded philosophers, the Nominalists, and the Empiricists (like **David Hume**) were **not** impressed! The super-scholastic **Thomas Aquinas**, being Aristotelian, didn't think we could legitimately use the argument. Why not?

If **you** think God's existence is a self-evident truth...**St. Aquinas** does *not* smile upon you. 😞🙏 But, he elucidates:

"A self-evident proposition, though always self-evident in itself, is sometimes self-evident to us and sometimes not.

I maintain then that the proposition God exists is self-evident in itself. (Because God IS His own Existence.)

But, because what it is to be God is not evident to us, the proposition is not self-evident to us. (Thomas wants hard evidence, not verbal definitions! And you will read the *ways* he proves God's existence in the next section.)

"God's existence needs to be made evident by things more evident to us, namely effects." *Summa Theologica* 1a2.1

If **you** do not find Anselm's ontological claim convincing, can you state why not? *Hmm*. For starters, might you want to challenge those aforementioned assumptions? Come on, this is as easy as **A B C**. (NOT.)

A. Is *greatest* being the *most real*? Not to Stoics and pantheistic monists to whom God is an immanent being. Not everyone accepts a Neo-Platonic hierarchical delineation of reality and definition of God!

B. Can you even grasp **GCB** *much less* reason **from** an ethereal thought **to** true reality? Some dismiss the argument because it requires us to delve into the deepest and most elusively **abstract concepts** in the history of philosophy! **Essence & Existence!**

C. And what kind of existence is a logical necessity such that: the denial of it would be a self-contradiction?

Is God's existence an ontological necessity such that: God cannot **not** exist? Anselm's argument depends on these but...

Can 'existence' serve as a **predicate**? (Indeed, is 'existence' a property that beings possess, an attribute? Like: "He is so & so.")

Think of it this way: Would you declare- "**God is IS.**" Well that's what critics say the argument does when it insists that

God IS necessary **existence!** But really, that's **all subject, no predicate!** And if a 'fool' denies the **subject...everything** vaporizes with it and the denier has *not* uttered a self-contradiction after all! (Just a simple negation.)

Is the whole notion of **absolute necessary existence** coherent? Is *any* of this even intelligible?

Don't be afraid to say **No**, students! The notions of logical and ontological necessity are not readily apprehended.

Frankly, there are people who think Anselm's reasoning makes **no sense at all!**

It was the 18th c. philosopher Immanuel Kant (a serene *believer* in God) who rejected the ‘confounded’ notion of ‘existence’ as a predicate. And, it was Kant who dubbed this Anselm-Descartes argument “**ontological.**” Kant called it a **sophistical** mode of argumentation and hoped to finally put an end to it! Having a mere idea of absolute necessary being, said Kant, does **not** contribute to our stock of objective knowledge anymore than “the merchant can increase his wealth by adding zeros to his bank account.”!

§ + 000000

☹ Sad eh? St. Anselm’s inner-illumination on God’s Necessary Existence has taken harsh criticism over the ages:

- 💡 Some say it is classic **question-begging**, because it must at least be thought *possible* that God exists for the argument to lift off! We should not have to grant a premise that is virtually the same as the conclusion!
- 💡 Some see it as a mere **verbal trick** (‘true by definition’ but giving no substantial information!)
The *a priori* proposition: “A necessary being necessarily exists,” though true as a sentence, does not effectively demonstrate that such a being IS actually out there!
Sorry, but far from being an irrefutable proof, it is a tricky little **tautology** that proves nothing!
- 💡 Worse, some think that by making only slight adjustments in the premises, you can use the formula to prove God does **NOT** exist! It’s possible!
- 💡 Our conception of ‘**GCB**’ is merely an idea, and perhaps all *that* means is ‘we imagine the unattainable’!
- 💡 What our conception of ‘God’ as the ‘**GCB**’ may prove, if anything, is *why we tend to believe in it...* and not that a God exists ‘for real.’

Don’t get depressed, be ontological. Can you conceive of a medieval corollary to Anselmian reasoning?

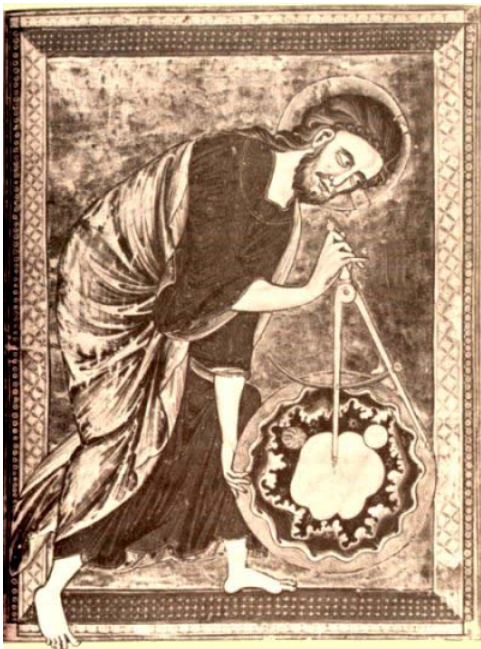
To wit...Answer these time-honored questions using Anselm’s ontological argument:

Philosophical Version — **Why** is there something rather than nothing? **Why** should *anything at all* exist?!

Theological Version — **Why** did God bother to create anything at all? Being perfect and complete within the godhead, He had no need to make anything else...so **why did He?**

In the ponderous scholastic synthesis of Philosophy and Theology, *these very questions* were discussed and there is a ‘greatest conceivable answer’ implied by Anselm. Come tell me if you figure it out! † †

Don’t you find **scholastic speculation** interesting? Here, you aren’t allowed to say No. ☹



AQUINAS' COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Quinque Viae

Aquinas probably had more confidence in the human intellect than anyone since Aristotle, and he did not distrust the senses as Anselm did. So his Natural Theology *can* begin with nature and point to supernatural revelation (grace).

The complementary activities of Reason and Faith can *both* “know” that God exists.

Familiar as they now were with Aristotle’s writings on **cause, change and motion**, theologians (Jewish, Christian, *and* Islamic) of the late medieval era had developed arguments based on Aristotelian cosmology.

We observe movement in the cosmos and conclude that there must be a prime mover. We observe cause–effect in the cosmos and posit a first cause. This is the manifest evidence of **Cosmological** argumentation.

The *Quinque Viae* “Five Ways” argument comes from *Summa Theologica*. Thomas responds to *this* objection:


Everything that appears in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing that God does not exist.

All Natural things can be reduced to one principle: Nature.

All things that happen intentionally can be reduced to one principle: Human Will.

There is no need to suppose God’s existence.

Then in one resplendent statement Aquinas says:

 “On the other hand Scripture shows God as declaring *I am who I am*”!

Of course he doesn’t leave it at that, for that would be supernaturally revealed and Aquinas’ forte is **natural theology**.

He replies: “There are **five ways** in which one can **prove** that there is a **God**.”

❶ The **first** and more manifest way is the argument from **motion**:

It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion.

Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself.

Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand.

Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and **this everyone understands to be God**.

❷ The **second** way is from the nature of the **efficient cause**:

In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes.

There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one.

Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false.

Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which **everyone gives the name of God**.

3 The **third** way is taken from **possibility and necessity**:

We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be.

Since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing.

Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence—which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes.

Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity.

This all men speak of as God.

4 The **fourth** way is taken from the **gradation** to be found in things:

Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like.

But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaphysics*. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things.

Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; **and this we call God.**

5 The **fifth** way is taken from the **governance** of the world:

We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end.

And this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result.

Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer.

Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; **and this being we call God.**

 **? COMMENTS:**

The first **3** ways are akin and are said to comprise the **core** of the **Cosmological Argument**. (But, did you sniff a haunting tinge of **Anselm's Ontological Necessity**? According to Kant, the Cosmological argument *presupposes* the cogency of the Ontological argument!)

The **4th** has a touch of the **Moral Argument**. (Do you find all **4** to be rather "vertical and hierarchical"?)

The **5th** is similar to the **Teleological Argument**. Some even call it an argument from **Design**.

The genius of this 'chain of arguments' is that it purports to demonstrate from the workings of the Cosmos itself that the Cosmos could not even exist at all unless a God does! *In short:*

Something exists...it could not have caused itself...it could not have appeared out of nothing...it could not be an effect in an infinite series of causes and effects...so there **MUST** be an Uncaused Causer and a Necessary Being...we know good-better-best, so there must be a Perfect Source of all Goodness...there must be a Guiding Intelligence behind all this.

GOD EXISTS! CASE CLOSED!

But the Case *isn't* Closed if a “jury’s still out” and the **Five Ways** argument has had its opponents and critics. 🤔

For alleging to be an empirical argument...it requires us to grasp the abstract idea of **Necessary Existence** and then it simply claims that **that means God!** Critics surely denounce such a flying leap. If Anselm’s mistake was to argue **from** an ‘idea’ **to** a reality...do you find Aquinas’ Way any more solid?

Cosmological reasoning may be an appropriate way to grapple with that famous basic question:
“Why does anything at all exist?”

But if you keep on answering: **“Because something else existed prior”**...until you finally **MUST** say...

● “But it all **stops** at something totally different than all other things...something that exists independently of everything else...a completely distinctive kind of existence.....” ...*do you see the problem emerge?*
That problem is:

If your ‘terminal being’ is **so totally different than** all else, how can you apply your cosmological analogies to it, much less insist that “everyone calls it God!”

Besides, are we really so certain about **cause and effect** that we can extrapolate from mundane phenomena to Transcendent Reality? Or why can’t there be an eternal circle of causes and effects?

(By the 20th century, atheists don’t even care to ponder the Cause of these gratuitous Effects.)

(The Cosmos just **is**...and our existence is just raw awareness of that brute fact.)

One detractor said The Five Ways might mean there are **Five Gods** (Like a *Celestial Creation Council*?)



↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ‘If several men can join to build a house, why not several deities to frame a world?’ [David Hume]

At least you’d have to admit this: Aquinas’ chain of arguments does not demonstrate that all five proofs point to One-in-the-same Supreme Being!

Now take the seemingly straightforward claim that **‘design implies a Designer’** and push it to say... “Well then the Designer must have been designed...by some entity that also must have been designed...” And oops, you retain that ornery **infinite regress** problem. Critics are not convinced that you halt the regress simply by concluding that ‘the buck stops’ at the feet of a Being “everyone understands to be God.” **Some** folks aren’t even perturbed by the weird notion of infinite regress! And, if you still insist that there must be One *undesigned, unmoved, independent* Being...then why can’t the Cosmos itself “exist *in itself*” as a totality? Or, why couldn’t a Being who is *unmoved* for aeons, move in the future? Or, why couldn’t an Infinite Being create Infinite series of causes?

Worse yet, to doomsayers it is *not* evident that the Cosmos *moves toward* a ‘designated’ goal or purpose. Not at all. Design? Foey! Look at all the violent natural disasters; look at all the disease, disorder and waste...not to mention imminent catastrophes!

We are gathering empirical evidence from deep inside a Cosmos that does *not* run like perfect clockwork! Can we know with unassailable certainty how it all operates? No. Then how much less can safely argue **from** the apparent workings of the Cosmos **to** an Acosmic Reality?! (The ole Appearance vs. Reality Problem on a Cosmic Scale!) You just can’t ‘get there from here’! From the flux around us to a Final Fixed Reality.

These of course, are not counter-arguments, just comments that show how tough it is to find unimpeachable premises! The family of Cosmological arguments continues to engender intense scientific study and debate. Some are extremely technical and some are more ‘horizontal-temporal’ than Aquinas’ logical-vertical’ arguments. You may wish to look into the **Kalam Argument**, which puts the First Cause *in time* and addresses the beginning of the universe!

What do you think? How exactly do the heavens declare God’s handiwork? What do these “proofs” and arguments do for us? What place do they have in WV formation? Discuss amongst yourselves.

You have my blessing.

AN EPILOGUE AND A BLESSING

In the end, what do such arguments offer for our knowledge of God? Do they augment belief and amplify understanding? They can truly intensify our sense of *wonder!* Existence is awesome and the Cosmos is astonishing. Indeed, we're all for heightened *wonder* in this class. We *should* desire to be moved and improved!

This epilogue asks: do philosophical '**proofs**' move us closer to the true and living God? Well, **yes and no**. Natural Theology may posit a **Prime Mover**...and Logic may dish up a colorless concept of **Necessary Existence**. Philosophy may '*attribute*' highly impressive characteristics to this Ultimate Being:

Immutable	Impassible	Pure Actuality <i>sans</i> Potentiality	Thought Reflecting Itself
Eternal Being Outside Time	Absolute Perfect Goodness	The Form of Forms	

But this Ultimate Reality is **IMPERSONAL**. It is inactive, distant and disinterested. Would such a Being desire a loving relationship with His creatures, and pour Himself out to them? Would such a Being inspire hymns? We can see that there is an enormous gap between the "Prime Mover" and the blazingly personal "**I AM**".

The 'God of the Philosophers' is hardly equal to the Holy One of Israel. *Baruch ha Shem!*

Arguments and proofs work from reason or nature upward. Revelation comes from heaven down to humanity. The Judeo-Christian Biblical God offers Himself in gracious self-disclosure. His actions have borne evidence. Perhaps the best thing about 'reasoned faith' is how well it demonstrates our need for divine revelation! Still...

Does all this dialectic leave *you* 'unmoved'? Does the fervent reader want to exclaim that you '**only need Scripture**'?! Students have sincerely reacted that way. *You* may feel that way, but please consider:

How will you **relate** Revelation to other kinds of knowledge (physics, psychology, history, *etc.*)

That 'relating' is exactly what a metanarrative is supposed to do! There's your **WV** connection!

How can you be sure you are interpreting scripture correctly without some 'dialectic'?!

How genuine is your fervor for God's truth if you presume to 'have all the answers' without caring enough to comprehend the questions? How compelling would your witness be?

How will you be able to scrutinize your own presuppositions without logical tools? (Abelard's famous *Yes and No* was intended to show that Christians disagree and contradict each other, thus reason can help clarify the content of faith!)

And you don't disdain logical tools when they're employed to show how non-Theistic WVs are hopelessly inconsistent! So these 'proofs' at the very least provide a reasoned basis for seeking faith!

We have been given many gifts: reason, a cosmos full of wonders to discover, general and special revelation, and 'greatest' of all — the Incarnate Word. We can have logic *and* the Logos in a splendidly dynamic worldview. The Medieval Mind attempted a synthesis of all truth. With faulty authorities and unbiblical dogma they erred. But they can still inspire us to think deeply about reason and faith, and to submit our metaphysics and theology to an ever-reformed and hebraically-corrected reading of Scripture.

May You Be Blessed, dear students...

Always be ready with *cogent reasons* for your hope...but don't get *tangled-up* in them.

To hone your skills at ‘taking thoughts captive’ and delineating valid premises – read the classics of history, discourse with better minds, philosophize cautiously, and learn to think ‘worldviewishly.’

To contemplate or to help communicate God’s existence, you may want to study the *Proslogion* and the *Summa*...

And to *worship* God’s Glorious Existence, sing the Hebrew *Psalms!*



St. Anselm



Page from Summa Theologica



Psalm 1