

Philosophical and natural-law-based proofs of God

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At some stage, everyone who thinks about life on this earth asks themselves the question: where did it all come from? Two possible answers come into view: Did this huge universe and the many complex and varied life-forms on this planet develop solely from matter over millions of years, in a process lacking any planning and intelligence, and without any sort of goal or purpose? Or is there an intelligent Creator with plan and purpose? If the question can be decided in favour of the first answer, then the second would be void. The same logic also applies in reverse, of course. There is hardly any other question which generates such emotion, with tempers often running hot, ultimately leading to sharply divided opinions.

If in fact there is a God, that raises the issue of the demonstrability of His existence. From antiquity there have been attempts to 'prove God'. Here we will only showcase three such historical attempts.

1. The **cosmological proof** of God's existence (also known as the cosmological argument) concerns the origin of the universe and all life. We know from observation that everything that has a beginning has a cause (cause-and-effect reasoning). For any aspect of this world, if one mentally follows a chain of causality (what caused that cause, and in turn what caused that, and so on), ever further into the past, one arrives at the First Cause, the ground of all being. This original cause, the reasoning goes, is God. Since He had no beginning, He requires no cause.
2. The **ontological proof** or argument (Gk *ōn, ont* = being) is expressly intended for believers who want to better understand the content of their faith. The best-known formulation is from the British church father and philosopher *Anselm of Canterbury* (1033–1109). God here takes the role of a '*being than which no greater or more perfect can be conceived.*' He reasoned that if such a being did not exist, then one greater could be conceived (since to exist is greater than to not exist). So if God does not exist, He would not be the greatest conceivable being. Since this leads to a contradiction, such a one must exist.
3. The **teleological proof** or argument (Gk. *telos* = goal) concludes from the order and purposiveness of nature that intelligence must be behind all things—in the modern formulation, an Intelligent Designer. *Thomas Aquinas* (1225–1274) reasoned that since things in both the living and non-living world are seen to '*act for an end*' (purpose), a being must exist capable of imparting a goal or purpose.

These traditional proofs of God, here only briefly sketched, are based on considerations of plausibility arrived at through reasoning, and so we can describe them as **philosophical proofs** of the existence of a God. In contrast to these, we will mention proofs which are based on natural (or scientific) laws, i.e. **natural-law-based proofs** of God's existence.

The brief expression ‘proof of God’ can easily be misunderstood, as it can convey the idea that it is possible to make God subject to verification *in all His fullness*. This is not possible; for one thing because God has revealed of Himself:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55: 8–9).

So concerning every form of proof it is absolutely necessary to say in addition which characteristic of God’s is being referred to.

With the help of the natural laws of science, we can in fact prove a few of God’s characteristics, like for example

- His existence
- His omniscience (knowing all)
- His eternal being
- His omnipotence (all-powerful).^{1,2}

There are characteristics of God (e.g. mercy, goodness, holiness) which are only revealed in the Bible, and are not amenable to natural-law-based forms of proof. Amazingly, the love of God is capable of being proved on the basis of natural law.³ In this case, the Bible itself provides not only the formulation of the law, i.e.

- **“God is love”** (1 John 4:16),
- **“For [God’s] love is strong as death”** (Song of Solomon 8:6),

but also its threefold testing at the Crucifixion, as people goaded Jesus, the Son of God, to step down from the Cross. This taunting is by:

- the rulers of Israel (Luke 23:35);
- the two criminals crucified alongside Jesus (Matthew 27:44), one of whom later called on Jesus, and whom the Lord in His boundless love saved for eternity (Luke 23:39–43); and
- the passers-by (Mark 15:29, 32).

Kant’s critique of the traditional proofs of God

No contemplation of proofs of God can avoid mention of the leading Enlightenment philosopher *Immanuel Kant* (1724–1804), seen as the great demolisher of all the traditional proofs of God’s existence. Kant has become viewed as one of the leading figures of the Enlightenment’s humanistic assault on belief in the God of the Bible.

¹ Gitt, W., with Compton, R. and Fernandez, J., *Without Excuse (Information: the key to life)*, 2011, creation.com/s/10-2-577. This contains a detailed exposition of the information laws and how they function as a ‘hard proof’.

² The information law argument is also briefly summarised in the tract *Why as a scientist I believe the Bible* (wernergitt.com/scientist-believes).

³ Explained in detail in the tract *The proof of God’s existence—through love* (wernergitt.com/love-proof).

Kant maintained that our cognitive faculties are extremely limited. Our brain nonetheless constantly throws up questions which—according to him—overtax its capacity: questions about the purpose of life, about the universe, about eternity, the soul, immortality, and God.

The Bible on the other hand says that we are well able to know things about God: **“Be still, and know that I am God”** (Psalm 46:10)—**“For what can be known about God is plain to them”** (Romans 1:19).

In his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant maintained that we can in any case not recognise the world as it is, but only how it appears to us. “When contemplating God and the soul, reasoning falls short. We cannot know whether there is a God, whether He is loving or harsh, or whether He punishes sin or not. Equally we cannot know whether there is a soul and whether it lives on after death.” Though he never embraced atheism, with these fundamental statements, Kant places himself in clear opposition to the Bible.

Proofs of God in scientific terminology

Whether we are able to speak of a proof of God in scientific terms or not depends on the form of that proof.

Hard proofs (and also hard refutations) are new assertions which are based on a foundation so firm that they are no longer refutable. For example, proofs in the structural sciences of mathematics and information science, or those based on natural laws.

Then there are **soft proofs** (also soft refutations). For example, legal or historical proofs, which are in principle refutable via reliable sources. Or philosophical proofs, which could be refuted by superior reasoning. So while a soft proof can be correct in most cases, it is not compelling or definitive.

In reference 1, we show how through applying one of the Natural Laws of Information⁴ to the DNA information found in all living things the conclusion follows that: **There must be an intelligent Sender who has created this Universal Information.** That is a proof of God in the sense that a God who is an intelligent Sender must exist. This result based on natural laws leads to two direct conclusions:

DC1: Atheism is refuted.

DC2: The existence of God is confirmed.

At this point, the conclusion derived from SLI-4 only involves proof of God’s existence. So we can describe this as the **proof of God’s existence through a natural law of information.** One cannot conclude from this that it is the God of the Bible. But progressing this line of reasoning further allows us to also conclude that this God must be *all-knowing* and *eternal*.¹

A special form of a proof of God is presented in detail in ref. 1, and summarised in ref. 2. It is the **prophetic-mathematical proof of God.** Since this line of argument is based on the fulfilled prophecies of the Bible, it is a proof of God which in its statements clearly goes beyond conclusions based on natural law. So this proof is capable of showing the God of the Bible to be the **only** one in existence, and establishes the Bible as the book of truth.

⁴ Scientific (natural) Law of Information SLI-4: “Universal Information (UI) can only be created by an intelligent sender.”

The purpose of a proof of God

Is it even necessary to construct a proof of God? What is gained thereby? In the so-called Christian West, only a small percentage of the population still reads the Bible. Many have no religious affiliation; the vast majority are atheistic or agnostic and, from experience, are barely reachable any longer through just proclaiming the Bible. A proof of God can persuade some that they are on the wrong track as an atheist or agnostic. So they then have a serious reason to concern themselves with the Bible and the Gospel.

Falsifiability of proofs of God

We have already discussed the distinction between hard and soft proofs generally, which also applies to the different forms of proofs of God's existence. When it comes to those based on natural laws, since from a scientific viewpoint there is no higher authority than the natural laws, there is also no criterion by which such proofs of God could fail. There is a further way to understand why a hard proof of God is irrefutable: If the existence of God has been established through natural law, one will never find another natural law which could refute this outcome, since by definition there is no such thing as a natural law which contradicts another.

Soft proofs include all those proofs of God not based on natural laws. Even when these are ever-so-plausibly formulated, they always carry the risk of refutation, as they are not based on an absolutely immutable foundation. If Kant is referred to as the refuter ('destroyer') of proofs of God, that can only refer to soft proofs, not based upon natural law. Note that Kant may have criticised one or the other soft proof of God, but if he only argued philosophically and not from the standpoint of natural law, one cannot speak of refutation or 'demolition'. No one can refute God's existence, since it has already been proven on the basis of natural law. Since natural laws are immutable, and cannot contradict one another, refutation is in principle no longer possible.

Proofs of God and salvation

Through the acceptance of a proof of God one has not yet come to saving faith. It still requires the revelation through the Holy Spirit that Jesus must be accepted as personal Saviour through a free decision. Although proofs of God do not directly lead to faith, they are nonetheless able to clear a number of obstacles to faith out of someone's way. Saving faith depends on Jesus. This is established by two passages from the New Testament: ***"Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life"*** (1 John 5:12). ***"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God"*** (John 3:18).

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