

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT: THE FIVE WAYS

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE WAYS

Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was a medieval Christian theologian from Italy. Deploying syllogism, he proposed a set of philosophical arguments which he claimed offered evidence for God's existence. These are known as the cosmological arguments.

The cosmological arguments (also known as '*The Five Ways*') are based on the order of the cosmos, and the natural laws and logic therein. A summary of these five arguments were published in Aquinas' '*Summa Theologiae*' in 1485.

The arguments are offered as evidence that God exists, particularly with reference to the creation of the world. The second and fifth arguments are expanded upon in two different resources – [here](#) and [here](#).

Below is a summary of each of the five arguments:

- The First Way: God, the Prime Mover
- The Second Way: God, the First Cause
- The Third Way: God, the Necessary Being
- The Fourth Way: God, the Absolute Being
- The Fifth Way: God, the Grand Designer

Syllogism (Greek: '*conclusion, inference*') is a kind of logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two or more propositions that are asserted or assumed to be true.

THE FIRST WAY: GOD, THE PRIME MOVER

The first argument refers to the laws of motion:

- Movement does not just happen on its own, there has to be something which creates motion.
- Therefore, before every movement there is prior movement.
- Movement is not and cannot be infinite, therefore something must have created the first motion – there has to be an origin.
- The origin of motion cannot be moving, as then this would have to be moved by something else.
- The unmoving origin of movement can only be God.
- Therefore, God exists.

THE SECOND WAY: GOD, THE FIRST CAUSE

This second argument is more commonly known as the cosmological argument. It refers to causality in drawing on the conclusion that God exists:

- Events do not just happen, there is something that caused them to occur.
- Therefore, every event has to have been caused.
- In order to have been caused, there has to have been a cause.
- Each event has been caused by a cause, there has to be an original cause; it can't go back forever.
- This original, or first cause, can only be God.
- Therefore, God exists.

THE THIRD WAY: GOD, THE NECESSARY BEING

The third argument states there is a difference between '*necessity*' and '*contingency*':

- In the world we see things that are possible to be.
- We also see things that are possible not to be, ie perishable, contingent.
- If everything was contingent, then nothing would exist now.
- However, things do exist now as, by necessity, if they didn't there would just be '*nothingness*'.
- Therefore, there must be something that is imperishable.
- That something has to God.
- Therefore, God exists.

THE FOURTH WAY: GOD, THE ABSOLUTE BEING

Also known as the Henological Argument, this argument considers the existence of God through degrees of perfection.

It is best explained as follows:

- Objects have properties to greater or lesser extents.
- If an object has a property to a lesser extent, then there exists some other object that has the property to the maximum possible degree.
- So, there is a being that has all properties to the maximum possible degree.
- The only possible being is God.
- Therefore, God exists.

THE FIFTH WAY: GOD, THE GRAND DESIGNER

The fifth argument is also known as the teleological argument:

- Every unintelligent thing in our world has its own purpose, a goal it follows through natural law.
- Direction and purpose following strict laws of nature always has the same end.
- Something that lacks knowledge cannot achieve its purpose unless guided by something with knowledge.
- Most of nature is unintelligent, but follows a direction, these specific laws of nature.
- If everything in nature needs guidance, then it needs an intelligent being, to guide and give it purpose.
- This can only be God.
- Therefore, God exists.