

### **Anselm's (1033-1109) ontological argument:**

Lord, what do we believe you to be? We believe that you are a being than which nothing greater can be conceived. But is there really such a nature? After all, "the fool has said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalm 14:1). Let us consider this.

I speak to the fool about a being than which nothing greater can be conceived, and he understands me. The being than which nothing greater can be conceived thus exists in his understanding, even though he does not believe that it exists. In other words, even the fool is convinced that "that than which nothing greater exists" exists in the understanding, because he understands the concept.

But let us consider this: is it greater to exist in the understanding alone or in the understanding *and* in reality? Surely, it is greater to exist in both the understanding and in reality.

But if this is the case, there must be something greater than the "greatest thing" which even the fool understands! Of course, this is absurd. There cannot be something greater than the greatest thing we can think. Hence, there is no doubt that a being exists than which nothing greater can be conceived, and this being exists in both the understanding and in reality. – paraphrase of Anselm's *Proslogion*, II.

1. How does Anselm define God?
2. Where does God exist, even for "the fool"?
3. How does Anselm "prove" God's existence?

### **Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) cosmological argument:**

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 motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. That which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot, because that would mean it was 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 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 movers; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

The second way is from the nature of cause and effect, or "efficient causes." 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.

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be. These things are found to be generated, and to be corrupted, and consequently, it is possible that they will one day decay and thus not exist. 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. 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. It is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another. 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 is what we call God.

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. 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.

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.

(From Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.2.3)

The form of the cosmological argument:

1. We observe  $x$ .
2. If  $x$  exists, there must be a  $y$ .
3. We cannot posit infinite  $y$ 's.
4. Therefore, there must be a first  $y$ .
5. This is what we call "God."