

God exists. Let us see what the argument looks like:

1. I have an idea of an infinitely perfect substance.
2. Such an idea must have a cause.
3. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*.
4. So the cause of an idea must have at least as much *formal* reality as there is *subjective* reality in the idea.
5. Though I am a substance, I am not infinitely perfect.
6. So I could not be the cause of this idea.
7. So there must be a formal reality that is an infinitely perfect substance.
8. So God exists.

Q29. Is this argument valid?

Q30. Are there premises in the argument that are less than certainly true?

5. Not b, because my existing now does not *follow from* my having existed in the past.
6. Not c, for this leads to an infinite regress.
7. Not d, for this couldn't account for the unity of the idea of God that I have.
8. So e, and God exists.

Q31. Is there a weak point in this argument? Is there more than one?

Q32. Why does Descartes think his idea of God must be innate?

Q33. Explain why Descartes says we cannot "comprehend" God but can "reach" him in thought. (Compare touching an elephant and wrapping your arms around it.)*

At the end of the third *Meditation*, Descartes feels he has achieved his aim. He now knows that he is not alone. In addition to himself there is at least one other being—a substance infinite in intelligence and power, and perfect in every way. This latter fact will prove to be of very great significance, for Descartes will use it to defeat the hypothesis of the evil demon; a perfect being could not be a deceiver. Thus he thinks he can overcome the deepest ground for skepticism about knowledge of the external world. But that is a line of argument pursued in the remaining meditations.

Meditation IV: On Truth and Falsity

In the last few days, I've gotten used to drawing my mind away from my senses. I've carefully noted that I really grasp very little about physical objects, that I know much more about the human mind, and that I know even more about God. Thus, I no longer find it hard to turn my thoughts away from things of which I can have mental images and toward things completely separate from matter, which I can only understand. Indeed, I have a much more distinct idea of the human mind, insofar as it is just a thinking thing that isn't extended in length, breadth, or depth and doesn't share anything else with physical objects, than I have of physical objects. And, when I note that I doubt or that I am incomplete and dependent, I have a clear and distinct

*Compare the similar thought by Aquinas, p. 275.

Meditation III contains two separate arguments for God's existence. The first one, which we have now examined, begins with the fact that each of us has an *idea* of God. The second one begins (on p. 333) with the fact that I exist. The argument then addresses whether I could exist if God does not. It is an argument by exclusion; it considers the other plausible candidates for the cause of my existence and shows in each case that it won't do. Note that both of these arguments are *causal* arguments. The first inquires about the cause of my *idea* of God, the second about the cause of my *existence*. Both make use of the causal principle Descartes has formulated.

Let us sketch the principal steps in this argument.

1. I exist.
2. There must be a cause for my existence.
3. The cause must be one of the following: (a) myself, (b) my always having existed, (c) my parents, (d) something else less perfect than God, or (e) God.
4. Not a, or I would have given myself perfections I now lack—because creating the properties of a substance is not as hard as creating the substance itself.