

# Proving the Philosophical Existence of God

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The existence of God is notoriously hard to prove. Something I believe makes me uniquely qualified to undertake such an enormous topic is that I have zero background in religion or ‘history’ regarding this subject. I was raised on the belief that there is some higher power but I was given the choice if I wanted to conform to any particular religion or not, which I never did. That being said, I strive to see the logical and analytic viewpoint in the debate for His existence. That, in my opinion, gives me an opportunity to look at these works by well known authors debating God’s existence through a different lense than most. I would like to compare two readings from Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica Treatise of the Divine Nature* and Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy* in order to think about the way these authors argue for His existence as well as whether or not their conclusions (which are certainly expressed very differently) ultimately add up to the same thing. Let us start by looking into the possible reasons behind the cause for these authors to begin looking into debating the existence of God.

Thomas Aquinas wrote a piece called *Summa Theologica Treatise of the Divine Nature* which was considered a masterpiece around 1274. In the introduction the speaker says that,

He (Aquinas) stated his intention to write a work that would ‘consider what pertains to the Christian religion in a manner befitting the instruction of beginners’. Accordingly, this Summa is Aquinas most accessible work, and the section translated here, the Treatise on Divine Nature is by far the best introduction to his views on the two central questions of philosophical theology: Does God exist and what is God like(xii)

This gives us an excellent look into what we should expect as we proceed further into Aquinas’ work. The main focus of his work is to prove the existence of God. Something specifically appealing about this book in particular is the fact that it is meant for ‘beginners’ and follows a

logical progression. Aquinas during the 13th century was influenced by the Western philosophy as it was recovering and translating all of Aristotle's major works. Aquinas attempts to ask the question about whether God's existence can be proven entirely through natural means in the preceding questions. He asks a total of 13 questions but I will be focusing on the following three questions: #2 Does God exist, #3 Divine Simplicity, #8 God's existence in things. I plan to give ample attention specifically on the previous three questions while also continuing a deep dive into the famous five ways to demonstrate the existence of God that presents itself in question 2. Let us continue on to Rene Descartes and his work on *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

Descartes's introduction does something a little bit different than the previous author. To begin, his introduction is written by himself whereas the previous was written by someone else. In the introduction, Descartes asks that if anyone finds anything worthy of refutation make him aware so he can later address those doubts and disbeliefs. He clearly thinks that other works out there about this topic are drawn from 'atheist commonplaces'. Descartes says specifically that, "In general that all the objections typically bandied about by the atheists to assail the existence of God always depend either on ascribing human emotions to God, or arrogantly claiming for our minds such power and wisdom that we attempt to determine and grasp dully what God can and ought to do"(pg 52). I think his purpose behind these meditations is not for the masses but rather for the few who will take the time to fully grasp the concepts he's attempting to understand, as well as specifically condemn the arguments and refutations that come from the disbelief in God. To put a finer point on the notion that convincing the non-believers won't be easy, Descartes suggests in *Meditations of First Philosophy* that, "For although it is quite enough for us faithful ones to accept by means of faith that the human soul does not perish with the body, and that God

exists, it certainly does not seem possible ever to persuade the infidels of any religion, indeed, we might almost say, of any moral virtue, unless to begin with, we prove these two facts by means of natural reason”(pg.47 paragraph 2). Now that we have a brief idea of the background influences and ideas that began the progression of both books, we can move forward to the nitty gritty arguments presented in both starting with Aquinas.

Thomas Aquinas believed that the existence of God was provable. He presented thirteen questions to help justify that view. Here, the focus will be on only one of the thirteen questions, specifically question 2 that asks “Does God exist?” He presents one of the most crucial arguments to support his belief, the five ways that proves the existence of God. Those are: motion or the first mover, the nature of efficient cause, the possible and the necessary, gradation to be found among things, and the governance of all things. After a careful review of his arguments on the five ways God exists, I believe the first way (argument from motion) establishes a foundation for the other four. Aquinas begins this most essential argument with a bold statement suggesting the reverse of what he believed the truth to be, saying that God does not exist for two reasons. The first reason notes that if one of two contraries were true then the other would not exist at all. If God is understood to be a form of infinite good, evil, therefore, should not exist but evil does exist. It would then logically follow that God does not exist.

The second point tackles the lack of necessity for God. He states, “ What can be accomplished through fewer principles is not brought about through more. But it seems that all natural phenomena can be accomplished through other principles when it is assumed God does not exist”(Article 3 lines 5-10). Aquinas supposes that things can be reduced down to their basic elements, whether according to natural law or human nature. After Aquinas’ initial statement that

denies any existence, he begins discussing the five ways God must exist in order to prove his former statement false. This question helps to continue to build a cohesive baseline for the whole argument which will eventually show that God does in fact exist. To start, we will go in depth on the arguments of the five ways that are said to prove God's existence according to Aquinas.

The first way is the argument of motion and the immovable first mover. Aquinas states, "Now whatever is moved is moved by another. For something is moved insofar as it is in potentiality with respect to that toward which it is moved, whereas something moves another insofar as it is in its actuality. For to move another is nothing but to bring something from potentiality to actuality." (Article 3 Reply line 15-20). There is no other way for something to be moved, if it were not moved by another. The world would be stationary. For example, consider the elements of fire, water, earth, and wind. Primarily out of the control of mankind, these elements follow only the laws of nature. Fire can move earth by burning everything in its path. Earth sprouts new growth and fosters the environment around us but can deprive fire of oxygen it needs for combustion. Water has the potential to move fire by drowning it. Through the fury of tornadoes and hurricanes, wind can spread fire, lift waves, and destroy earth. Each element has its own purpose but can also be changed by another. Is there a possibility that change and motion can be one and the same? Potential and motion are two aspects of the same thing because to shift from the potential state to action, motion must be initiated by something. Change in a sense, converts to motion because without motion there would be no change whatsoever. Aquinas then says that,

If the source of motion is itself moved then it must be moved by another and this is latter by another. Yet this (kind of causal chain) cannot proceed infinitely because then there would not be something that is a first mover and consequently no other

movers at all, since secondary (or moved) movers can move only so far as they are moved by a first mover, just as the stick only moves because of the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at some first mover that is put into motion by some first mover that is not put into motion by anything and this is all understood to be God.(Reply lines 30-39).

The first mover here seems to be understood as God. Can He put anything in motion? This idea seems to make sense. Dissecting this quote starting with the first sentence which says, “If the source of motion is itself moved then it must be moved by another and this is latter by another”, I understand Aquinas to be asserting that something cannot be put into motion by itself.

I do agree with Aquinas statement when he summarizes that there must be a first mover for every second mover and that the second can only go as far as the first. In this argument it makes sense that the first mover would need to be more infinite than any other because there are so many things that are moved and need to be moved. By ‘more infinite’ I mean a first mover that is not being put into motion by anything else. It must be bigger or more infinite in some way because if it were not then it would have been reduced down to a second or third movement in a chain. An example worth looking at in this regard would be the domino effect. In this scenario, the first mover we’ve been looking into would be the ‘hand’ that tips the domino. The second mover would be the first domino which in turn acts on the third domino and so on. It’s unclear if we have the ability to answer this question or think of ways God may put things into motion. If the first mover was only able to move a finite distance then some things would not have a chance to exist. Yes, time passes but if that first mover was finite, we have no idea what might happen if at some point time stopped. Everything must move to some extent as explained in the above example of the elements and nature, if the reach or length of time of the first mover was short or finite it might not be able to reach, say, water for example.

A different question to present might be that if we are in agreement that the first mover must be infinite, is there any other possibility than God? The idea of something mysterious initiating motion was not new. Mathematician and rational philosopher Thales of Miletus, who lived during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. during the intellectual revolution responsible for the rise of Greek civilization, had previously theorized the idea. Although his writings have not survived, we know about Thales through the teachings of Aristotle. Thales theorized that a key attribute of life is the ability to initiate movement and that the ability to initiate movement suggest, presence of the soul. Aristotle probed that idea more deeply and developed his concept of the Prime Mover or the first uncaused mover of all motion in the universe. When the first unmoved mover itself is not moved by any prior actions, it causes other things to move. Aristotle called that first unmoved mover God. This aids in the support for Aquinas argument for the idea of a first mover.

According to Aquinas the second way to prove the existence of God is from the nature of efficient causes. This means even though we tend to find an order of efficient cause among sensible things, there is no way for something to be the efficient cause of itself. The reason behind this is because in an ordered series of sensible things, the first is the cause of the intermediary (one or many) and the intermediary is the cause of the last and by taking the cause away you also take away the effect. An objection to this principle might say that if a first efficient cause doesn't exist then presumably we would be talking about an infinite series of efficient causes. And if someone believes that, why would they agree that universally, the 'first' is the cause of the intermediary? Wouldn't they rather say that the prior is the cause of the posterior, but there is no first? The answer here would be no. It seems clear that there must be

something that comes first. Again, something cannot come from nothing so without a first efficient cause there would be no second, third or fourth, etc. If the efficient causes were infinite that would take away all intermediary and last causes. This cannot happen because if the first efficient cause did not exist then neither would anything prior to it which is obviously untrue. This seems to prove then that it is necessary for there to be some efficient cause which again everyone names as God.

Let us move on to the third cause of God's existence, namely through the possible and the necessary, which might bring some clarity to the discussion of the previous two ways to prove His existence. Aquinas states,

We find that some things are possible with respect to existence and non-existence, since they are found to be generated and corrupted and consequently possible with respect to existence and nonexistence. But it is impossible for everything to exist like this, for that which can possibly not exist does not exist at some time. Accordingly if all things are possible with respect to non-existence then at some time there would have been nothing in reality (Reply lines 55-60).

This is a difficult statement to decipher but I believe it should go like this; how, in any respect, can you conceive something that did not exist in reality at one time. Non-existence seems like such a hard topic to discuss because we do not know what does not exist. We have no way of knowing what we don't know. Let us assert this: something cannot come from nothing. Thus in order to have all that we do in existence now, some form of said thing must have been real at one time or another. This contradicts Aquinas's argument. Soon after this he recants this statement by generally saying that if no being had existed at one time, then it would have been impossible for any being to exist after as well. It is proven that something has to be necessary in reality. He calls



this argument that of efficient cause. Thomas Aquinas's last statement on the third way God exists goes as such

Not every necessary being either has the cause of its necessity from another or not. But it is not possible to proceed infinitely in a series of necessity beings that have a cause of their necessity which was just proven in the case of efficient cause. Therefore it is necessary to posit something that is necessary through itself, something that does not have the cause of its necessity from another, but that is the cause of necessity for the others. That is what everyone calls God. (Reply 70-73).

We cannot have many necessary 'beings' that have their own causes individually. That would disrupt the idea of the first mover. It is then clear we must have 'being' necessary to itself and 'being' the cause of necessity for others. Aquinas has made it clear that there is a need for a cause of necessity for others and from this we all call it God. To answer the above mentioned question, from this argument it seems to be deduced that it cannot be something other than God itself.

Let us briefly discuss the fourth way to prove God's existence which is taken from the gradation to be found among things. This is the idea that one thing can be more or less than another. Aquinas says, "But more or less is said about diverse things insofar as they approach in their diverse ways something that is the maximum, as is in the case where something is hotter the more it approaches what is maximally hot." (Reply lines 75-79). From this idea, the following progression stems. Whatever is said to be the maximum in any genus is said to be the cause of everything in that genus. Aristotle brings up the example of instant fire such that is maximally hot and is the cause for all other instances of heat (Metaphysics II 993b25). From this, the jump is made to say that there must be something that is for everything else the cause of its existence and this we call God.

Finally, the fifth cause intends to prove the existence of God through the governance of all things. The argument being presented here is that some things that lack knowledge, act for the sake of a certain end. This becomes apparent because they continuously act the same way as to attain what is best. This means they act through intention. Some things though, act without intention and do not tend toward an end except under the direction of something else that holds intelligence and knowledge. The example given is an arrow shot from an archer. Therefore the conclusion follows that there must be some intelligent being by whom all natural things are ordered to an end and this intellectual being we call God.

After going through all five ways and specifically in great detail the first way, that of the motion and the immovable first mover, and the third way, that of the possible and the necessary, we see that Aquinas does seem to think that there is something greater than we can imagine at work. The first argument of the immovable first mover seems as though it must be the foundation and possibly the most important one. It explains the necessity of motion in regards to everything. Nothing would be possible if motion did not exist. The world would be stationary but it is not. Aquinas says that "Something can be brought from potentiality to actuality only through some being in actuality." (Article 3 Reply Line 22). The example used to further explain this statement is fire and wood.

Fire can make something like wood, which only has the potential to become hot, actually hot because fire alters the wood. Change and motion seem to go hand in hand because nothing without motion can change or evolve like the fire on wood. If God is the first mover and is infinite then the number of things [that can proceed from potential to] in motion would be

infinite as well. If you bring necessity into the picture, then motion and change is still something that every other thing must rely on.

It is true that something that is necessary through itself and that is the cause of necessity for others is understood to be God. How would anyone be able to determine what is necessary if nothing was in motion and all that exists remain in a state of potential? Motion and the first mover seem to be sort of basis or relied upon for the rest of the arguments but adding in the ideas of the nature of efficient causes, the possible and the necessary, the gradation of things and the governance of things there is a very strong argument based on logical reasoning to prove the existence of God.

To compare the logical progression that follows from Aquinas's five causes to a different yet similar type of work in Descartes Meditations will prove to be the next challenge. Do they end up at the same conclusion? Does Descartes work also prove that God must exist?

*The Meditations on First Philosophy* by Rene Descartes begins by giving a brief synopsis into the workings of the book. To begin, I want to discuss each of the meditations briefly before diving in depth to Descartes explanation and proof of God's existence with a focus on his arguments of truth, error, will and intelligence.

In Meditation one, Descartes' focus is concerning things that can be called into doubt. He is starting from ground zero by removing everything he thinks he knows and starting the process anew in order to come to the correct conclusion. This is an interesting beginning since it is presented to us as though it seems that he believes it is necessary to start by calling everything that is not absolutely certain and possible into doubt, and rejecting those ideas that are patently false or have any room for uncertainty. This is the radical move: once he identifies something as

doubtful at all, he rejects it as false, to see whether he can find some knowledge that is indubitable. His first argument begins with the senses. Descartes begins with a quote that says, "Surely whatever I had admitted until now as most true I received either from the senses or through the senses. However, I have noticed that the senses are sometimes deceptive, and it is a mark of prudence never to place our complete trust in those who deceive us even once."(pg 60, paragraph 18).

Having only true things come from the senses seems to be an accurate representation of our thoughts but the problem is that different things can be true for different individuals, which is why I believe he brings in a portion that says some senses could be deceptive. It is a difficult distinction to make but a valid one. It also begins to introduce the distinction of a universal truth that Descartes introduces with his example on being awake versus being asleep. The very interesting portion of the discussion regarding being awake or asleep is how he can not initially seem to find a way to distinguish between the two. Descartes explains that through our sleep, we see things that are painted images of only that which are true images of things we know. The example provided is that of imagining the eyes, hands, head and whole body which are not imaginary things but are true and do exist. Although they can be imagined when you dream, you cannot deny that they are simply and universally true. There are certain things called universal truths, like two plus two equals four, that will be true whether or not you are awake or sleeping. The recurring theme in this meditation is truth and thus far he has laid the most basic foundation for his next statement, that concerning God and his truth.

Descartes first statement concerning God talks about how He exists, being able to do anything as the Author of our origin. The suggestion of God being a deceiver is introduced with

the examples of there being no earth, heavens, shape, size or place. Descartes then retracts it when he explains how repugnant it would be for God's goodness to have created him just to be deceived all of the time. Descartes says, "But because being deceived and being mistaken appear to be certain imperfections, the less powerful they take the author of my origin to be, the more probable it will be that I am always deceived."(pg.62 paragraph 21). The first thing that comes to mind after working through this argument would be that it is permissible to doubt everything. This helps us to move a step closer to the truth because what cannot be doubted is therefore undeniably true.

On that account, it seems that God has so much power and goodness in him that it would be impossible to be deceived. If He could be, it would follow that God is not strong enough to keep the deception away. To address the opposite of goodness, Descartes proceeds to look at the possibility of God doing bad. The reason to look at the possible deception being shown to him has a two fold purpose. The first is to turn Descartes own will in the complete opposite direction of the goodness God provides towards the deceiving side. By doing this, the second purpose would be to eventually have the power to resist any argument to be deceived or any other bad tendencies that would sway him from the truth. My final thought on this matter of truth is when Descartes implies that if it is not in his power to know anything true, it is definitely in his power to withhold his assent to the false and the deceiver.

Meditation two is concerned with the nature of the human mind and how it is better known than the human body. Descartes chooses to continue down the same path as the first meditation and completely disregard anything where doubt is permissible and views it as completely false. This meditation seems to use truth as a bigger theme. Descartes says,

“Therefore I suppose everything that I see is false. I believe that none of what my deceitful memory represents ever existed. I have no sense whatsoever. Body, shape, extension, movement and place are all chimeras. What then will be true? Perhaps just the single fact that nothing is certain.” (pg.63 paragraph 24). He questions that if we do have that fact alone that nothing is certain, would it follow that there is no thing or occasion where not the slightest sense of doubt is present? How would we know that? I really like this quote because it makes a very valid foundation for the argument he uses about being so connected to the body and the sense that it can be called into question if we can even exist without them.

Descartes takes the position that there is nothing present in the world, no bodies, minds, earth or sky as a tool (a *reductio*) to prove the truth of our abilities as thinking beings. If it were the case that nothing existed in the world, how would we explain our own existence? It seems through this meditation that if we can be persuaded of something then it is doubtless that we do indeed exist and that if we can be deceived (by a supremely powerful being) then there is no doubt that we do exist. Following this it makes sense that He, the great deceiver, will never be able to prove that we are nothing as long as we think we are something. Descartes believed that doubting was the one thing he could be certain of. In fact, he uses doubt or disbelief for anything that could be construed as being plainly false or possibly false because his senses and faculty of reason might be deceiving him. They had done that before. Thus comes forth the most powerful part and purpose of this meditation. “I am, I exist”. Is this statement a truth that things can be based upon or are we only able to believe it when we say it? So far through these arguments Descartes lays out for us, ‘I am, I exist’ would need to be a truth that we can base things upon. Sure, it is true every time we utter the statement, but how would we connect other arguments to

it? Thought exists and cannot be separated from us as beings, therefore 'I am, I exist' is necessarily true for as long as we are thinking which is indefinitely the case. Descartes says, "For since I now know that even bodies are not, properly speaking, perceived by the senses or by the faculty of imagination, but by the intellect alone and that they are not perceived through their being touched or seen, but only through their being understood, I manifestly know that nothing can be perceived more easily and more evidently than my own mind" (pg.69 paragraph 34). This is an important quote because it begins showing the connection of intellect with the truth of the mind and our existence. Descartes draws these conclusions initially from a piece of wax but also makes a connection to men themselves by saying,

For we say that we see the wax itself, if it be present, and not that we judge it to be present from its color or shape. Whence I might conclude straightaway that I know wax through the vision had by the eye and not through an inspection on the part of the mind alone. But then were I perchance to look out my window and observe men crossing the square, I would ordinarily say I see the men themselves just as I say I see the wax. But what do I see apart from hats and clothes, which could conceal automata? Yet I judge them to be men. Thus what I thought I had seen with my eyes, I actually grasped solely on the faculty of judgement, which is in my mind. (pg. 68 paragraph 32)

This quotation provides us with a direct correlation to how we perceive bodies which helps fill in the gap that the previous quotation left open ended, specifically the connection to 'I think therefore I am'. Through this meditation alone, the truth of our existence as thinking beings has been determined so now we move on to a more mysterious topic.

Concerning God, That He Exists, is our focus for meditation three. Although the topic of this meditation is God's existence, Descartes begins with what we already know; namely that we are thinking things, something that doubts, affirms, denies, and so on. "The first instance of knowledge, there is nothing but a certain clear and distinct perception of what I affirm"(pg.70

paragraph 35). Meditation three introduces the idea of judgement into our consciousness.

Descartes uses it to initially make a distinction from volitions or affects and will. To discuss the most frequent error made in judgement, we are consistent in the fact that we judge the ideas which are in us as similar or in conformity with certain things outside of us. How would one be aware of things outside of us? According to meditation two we can only judge the things inside of us. Would it be logical to make the assumption that we can understand these ideas and make judgements on things outside of us because these ideas are innate in us? These ideas seem to have been taught to us by nature. That being said, they do not depend on our will. Sometimes they are even against our will. Descartes uses the phrase 'taught by nature' to mean that they are driven by a spontaneous impulse to believe it. Although these types of ideas do not depend upon my will, it does not follow that they necessarily proceed from things outside us. I think the only way these ideas could be innate in us is if they were placed there by God namely because if we had no prior experience or knowledge of certain thoughts/feelings then where would they have come from? To briefly clarify, we define the word innate as things which are inherent inside of us and adventitious as things that happen by chance or by accident. For example, we seem to have this idea of inherent good or inherent evil. Most humans believe that a serial killer is inherently evil. There is no further explanation needed that might be able to dissuade someone from believing there is a just, good reason to murder an innocent person. It is seen as evil. Yet while we all repel against thoughts and actions like those, why do we do that? It could just as easily be seen as the 'norm' if we had no prior experience or knowledge. This leads me to believe that the only things that could possibly be innate in us are those placed by God. If we were not all connected by His grace and intelligence, how would we know anything at all?



In meditation three, Descartes groups all thoughts into certain classes to see the truth of which the falsity resides. One form of thought is thinking about the word idea. Does it apply to the sky, moon, man, angel, or God? Some of these thoughts we have are called volitions or affects while others are called judgements. The second form of thought is when we will, fear, affirm, or deny something. We can always grasp 'something' as the subject of our thoughts that we attribute those factors to. We should not fear the possibilities in will or affects thus there remain judgements in which we cannot mistake. Although these ideas don't depend on our will, it doesn't necessarily mean that they proceed from things outside us. As it seems now, there are ideas formed within us without help from external things when we sleep. For example, we have the idea that the sun gives us two different thoughts. The first is drawn from the sense, for example that the sun is relatively small and proportional to the sky. While the second is astronomical reasoning that says the sun is enormous compared to the planets. This idea brings us to a point I mentioned briefly in the previous paragraph about ideas that are innate in us. Descartes says, "For if we assume that something is found in the idea that was not in its cause, then the idea gets that something from nothing. Yet, as imperfect a mode of being as this is by which a thing exists in the intellect objectively through an idea, nevertheless it is plainly not nothing; hence it cannot get its being from nothing."(p.74 paragraph 41).

I believe here Descartes is addressing the fact that those innate ideas in us, that have no other cause or explanations that are apparent, must come from God. By those ideas coming from God, supposedly, in a way proves his existence because as he says above, something cannot get their being from nothing. This idea is largely important for the particular idea of God. When we talk about bodies for example, it is possible to get that idea from actual bodies or from some

unconscious portion of the mind but in all of those cases the reality in the idea would come from something with as much reality as the idea itself. The idea of God has so much reality within it, that it can only come from a source that is itself infinite. This is the first real proof into God's existence. If something is innate in us then we will most likely have perceived it before anything else. Would it be correct to say that those innate ideas would be our perception of the infinite? We would be able to say from that statement that our perception of God (the infinite) is prior to the perception of ourselves (the finite). Descartes says,

Thus there only remains the idea of God. I must consider whether there is anything in this idea that could not have originated from me. I understand by the name God a certain substance that is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent and powerful created me along with everything else that exists-- if anything else exists.... I must conclude that God necessarily exists (page 76).

How can we understand things that we doubt or desire? By this I mean to say how do we understand things that we ourselves are lacking or things that are not wholly perfect. The only real way to be able to determine this is if we had something equally absolutely perfect to compare it to.

The next clear line of thinking would be to determine whether all of the possible perfections we attribute to God are somehow in us as well, although obviously not as perfect. If so it would follow that since God is infinite, nothing more can be added to His perfection and there will be nothing more perfect than Him. Since we are all just mere images of his perfection, it seems impossible to exist without him. In meditation three, it seems we have discovered that God does exist and in fact nothing is more perfect nor more infinite than Him. Let us briefly discuss meditations four and five before moving on to meditation six and the conclusion.

Meditation four is mainly concerning the true and the false or, more simply put, error and will. The meditation starts with an explanation of how deception is incompatible with God and judgement is received by Him. From this, Descartes makes the assumption that we are never capable of making errors. But, that being said, I think Descartes would agree that the only possible way to never make mistakes is when we are exclusively thinking of God. If we are focused on ourselves, we begin to stray away from the truth. Humans lack perfection, being somewhere between God and nothingness, so focusing on ourselves is where we begin to make those mistakes. Descartes defines error as, “not a pure negation, but rather a privation or lack of some knowledge that somehow ought to be in me” (page 82 line 55). We are capable of mistakes because, although our judgment comes from God, it is not infinite. We were provided with the judgement God gave us but we cannot have complete knowledge therefore our error comes from things we don’t know. The next idea that is proposed is that of will. The first thought that comes to mind for me concerns free-will. He says, “But from these considerations I perceive that the power of will, which I got from God, is not, taken by itself, the cause of my errors, for it is most ample as well as perfect in its kind. Nor is my power of understanding the cause of my errors. For since I got my powers of understanding from God whatever I understand I doubtless understand rightly,” (page 84, line 58). I think it is possible that some of our cause for error comes with the free will God created us with. Our will is restrained when we make judgements so we can extend it towards things that we recognize with intellect and not just things picked up by the senses.

Meditation five focuses on the essence of material things and again God’s existence. There is only one real point I’d like to touch on in meditation five and it is more of an example.

This piece alone helped me to understand and really connect with how to think about God's existence. The example begins as such, "From the fact that I am unable to think of a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that a mountain or a valley exist elsewhere, but only that, whether they exist or not, a mountain and a valley are inseparable from one another. But from the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God, and that for this reason He really exists." (p.89, 67). From this explanation and example alone, I would believe in God's existence namely because the example of mountains and valleys shows us how we cannot have one thing without another. They are inseparable just as God and existence are.

Our final meditation is concerning the existence of material things and the real distinction between mind and body. The first argument Descartes presents to us is that of imagination versus pure intelligence. Descartes gives the example of a triangle which we can easily imagine with its distinct three sides and a chiliagon which is a thousand-sided figure. Clearly the chiliagon has to be a product of pure intelligence since it seems quite impossible for us to imagine a figure with a thousand sides. Imagination can be actualized, provided a body exists for it (i.e. a three-sided triangle). Provided we are able to use our senses with the aid of our memory, we are more likely to perceive things more clearly and arrive at imagination. Decartes says, "Since the ideas perceived by sense were much more vivid and explicit and even, in their own way, more distinct than any of those that I deliberately and knowingly formed through meditations or that I found impressed on my memory, it seemed impossible that they came from myself." (page 94, line 75). He uses this to distinguish the fact that we cannot predetermine something from intellect that we did not already know beforehand from our senses. The next topic that really talks about the

remainder of this meditation is the idea of being taught by nature. We very briefly touched on this concept in meditation three and I'd really like to give some consideration to it. Why do we feel the sting of pain or the excitement of pleasure? No other reason than we were taught by nature.

How does Descartes use the phrase 'taught by nature'? We take its use as a mutual understanding of God's creation of the higher network of things we perceive. Taught by nature also includes everything taught to us regarding what we judge concerning the object of our senses. We seem driven by nature toward things which reason tries to dissuade us from like the example provided above about pain and pleasure. Nature has taught us to avoid things that cause pain and to seek out those that cause pleasure. There are some things that are not taught by nature. Rather they are certain habits of reckless judgements. Again, taken by nature can mean everything bestowed by God. It mutually avoids everything that belongs exclusively to the body while solely focusing on that which God has graced us with. It therefore remains to inquire here how the goodness of God does not prevent nature. This is a question I am not sure I have the answer to. Descartes says, "As a result, this mode of thinking may differ from pure intelligence only in the sense that the mind when it's understood in a sense turns towards itself and looks at one of these ideas inherent in us."(p.93).

In conclusion, we have been able to dive in-depth into many topics, including God's existence while simply touching the source of others like the idea taught by nature. Understanding the existence of God is limited to us in only a human understanding and what we have the capability of grasping. Being this omnipresent and infinite first mover, we have no first hand experience here. Humans are finite beings and therefore can only possess a finite

understanding of what is understood of His existence. That being said, the idea of our existence as human beings relying on his perfection and supreme power does make sense. We see the truth in the idea of God that is innate in us. We only are capable of error when we turn our thoughts away from Him to something that is less perfect like ourselves. We begin to make mistakes because we can only make judgments off of what we know, which is only a finite amount compared to the infinite knowledge God possesses. Yet, we use our intelligence to see the difference between that and imagination. In the end, after carefully considering each meditation, I do believe I have been convinced of God's existence through these arguments.

After examining both pieces of writing, I believe there is a connection to be made here. First off with Aquinas, it seems the biggest portion of his argument relies upon the idea of a first mover and the necessity of it. The other four ways he uses to prove the existence of God seem to be formed upon that first baseline idea. Aquinas's whole argument of proving God's existence through five ways follows a logical reasoning pattern. The similarities begin to show themselves when looking towards Descartes's meditations. Both authors seem to try and prove His existence using logic. In Descartes's case if you can strip away everything that is possible to doubt, you can find what truly exists, i.e. God. According to Aquinas, it does not so much require you to find solitude to meditate but more that in order for numerous amounts of things to be put into existence there must be a chain of events. Something cannot come from nothing. Assuming there is something that causes movement, it cannot be a finite thing which tells us this first mover must be God. I believe here the connection to be made is that first we see Aquinas' ideas about the series of cause and effect relationships (how the first is the cause of the intermediate and so on)

followed by Descartes ideas in the third meditation about how something cannot come from nothing. In meditation three Descartes says,

Thus there remains only the idea of God. I must consider whether there is anything in this idea that could not have originated from me. I understand by the name 'God' a certain substance that is infinite, independant, supremely intelligent and supremely powerful, and that created me along with everything else that exists- if anything exists. Indeed all these are such that, the more carefully I focus my attention on them, the less possible it seems they could have arisen from myself alone. Thus, from what has been said, I must conclude that God necessarily exists. (pg.76 paragraph 45)

Here, Descartes' belief is clearly asserted for us. By using all five ways from Aquinas and all Six Meditations from Descartes, it provides a full picture of the arguments present. Ultimately I believe they are saying the same thing which in turn shows the way that both authors have proved, in a philosophical sense, the existence of God.