

Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number

Candidate name

School number

School name

Examination session (May or November)

May

Year

2012

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Philosophy

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: ~~To be proven or disproven~~

~~with reason of course~~

Can the existance of God be proven with reason?

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: _____

Date: 01/19/12

Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) _____

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

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I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: _____

Date: 1/23/12

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number

Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	1 ✓	2		2	
B introduction	1 ✓	2		2	
C investigation	2 ✓	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	1 ✓	4		4	
E reasoned argument	2 ✓	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	2 ✓	4		4	
G use of subject language	3 ✓	4		4	
H conclusion	1 ✓	2		2	
I formal presentation	2 ✓	4		4	
J abstract	1 ✓	2		2	
K holistic judgment	1 ✓	4		4	
Total out of 36	17 ✓				

Name of examiner 1: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: _____

Name of examiner 2: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: _____

Name of examiner 3: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: _____

IB Cardiff use only: B:

IB Cardiff use only: A: 094141

Date: 3/4/12

« To be proven or disproven »

« With reason of course »

Candidate:

May 2012

Word count: 3,377

Abstract

Over time many philosophers have tried to prove or disprove the existence of God through multiple methods using different ways of knowing. From this I am posing the question, "Can the existence of God be proven with reason?" My paper focuses on answering the question can the existence of God be proven with the use of reason. In order to answer this question, I researched the philosophical arguments of known philosophers, namely Immanuel Kant, St. Anselm, Gaunilo, Blaise Pascal and Soren Kierkegaard in attempt to prove or disprove the existence of God through reason. In writing this paper I came to the conclusion that the existence of God can neither be proven nor disproven with the use of reason nor experience for that matter. I found that reason is a universal concept, meaning it is concept that could be agreed upon by a variety of people because it is logic that can be followed by everyone despite religious preference. The existence of God heavily relies on religion which is an area of knowledge that varies greatly between people, therefore it cannot be used as a way of knowing or proving claims are knowledge. The word proving suggests that conclusions are being made based upon physical evidence and in this case there is no evidence that can prove or disprove the existence of God. In order to better support my conclusion, I incorporated different views from different philosophers that have taken the views of: the existence of God can be proven with reason, neither proven nor disproven with reason, and impossible to prove with reason. Even with these arguments, it is difficult to prove or disprove the existence of God with reason.

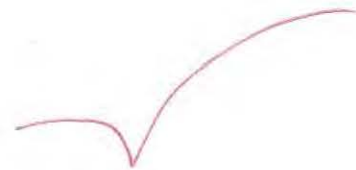
(Not all so clear)

Wide
... }

(Vague)

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Introduction

“The sum total of all possible knowledge of God is not possible for a human being, not even through a true revelation. But it is one of the worthiest inquiries to see how far our reason can go in the knowledge of God.” (Kant) I found myself intrigued by the topic of religion as it pertains to philosophy. Furthering my interest, I researched the philosophy of religion and possible topics for my paper. With the understanding that religion is a personal topic for some, I wanted to choose a topic the sparked my interest, yet respected the religious views of others. In my research I found that there are multiple arguments formulated by philosophers surrounding the question of ‘Can the existence of God be proven with the use of reason?’

In order to answer the question ‘Can the existence of God be proven with the use of reason?’ I will be using the Ontological argument by St Anselm, which states that “God is a perfect being, and it is an imperfection not to exist, hence since God is perfect, he must exist (Gould, 1995).” In addition to this argument I will be using the Transcendental argument by Kant, which says that “ God is a precondition of all human knowledge and experience, by demonstrating the impossibility of the contrary (Enotes.com, nd)”, an argument by Blaise Pascal that says “it is better to believe in God’s existence than to deny it [because] there is no rational proof for or against God’s existence” (Gould, 1995) and finally an argument by Soren Kierkegaard, which argues that “attempts to prove God’s existence from reason and experience are impossible because such proofs do not exist, but at most provide a conception of God. (Gould, 1995)” For each argument I will present its entirety, interpret and examine its possible strengths and weaknesses.

a bit general

Ontological argument

It has been argued that the existence of God can be proven through the use of reason, therefore proving that the existence of God can be proven with reason. This proof was first given by St. Anselm, who claims that “once we understand the nature of God we realize that it implies his existence. One might argue that God is a perfect being, and it is an imperfection not to exist. Hence, since he is perfect, he must exist.” (St. Anselm) “St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109), is the originator of the ontological argument, which he describes in the Proslogium as follows:

“[Even a] fool, when he hears of ... a being than which nothing greater can be conceived ... understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding.... And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.... Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality. (Anselm)”

In the beginning, it is stated that God is a “being”, connoting that he exist in a physical, mental and/or symbolic form. It can be agreed that God is in fact a being that does in fact exist. The argument does state that God exist as a being, but it fail to present evidence that prove the claim that God exist through reason. It is to be assumed that everyone already know that the existence of God is a fact or a true justified belief. St. Anselm argues that the existence of God is

descriptive

self-evident simply because God is considered to be a perfect being, not necessarily because there is evidence to support his existence. He also argues that perfection is necessary for existence; therefore God can only exist through the concept of perfection. In the creation of mankind no one was made perfect. If everyone was perfect the world would also be perfect because everyone in it is perfect, but in reality the world and the people in it have multiple flaws. If everyone was perfect there would be no need for improvement.

The concept of perfection has a definition left open to interpretation, ergo one cannot argue that something exist solely through perfection. The argument as a whole simply says that the existence of God is self-evident because God as a being is perfect, which does not prove that the existence of God can be proven with reason. Though he states that the Ontological argument proves the existence of God with reason, the argument fail to present logical evidence that can be considered as proof for reason.

Gaunilo's argument

“A counterargument was given by a certain monk named Gaunilo, who claimed that, if Anselm is correct, then we must conclude the existence of a perfect island, or indeed a perfect anything at all. If it is greater to exist than not to exist, then there must be a greatest member of any class of beings whatsoever. Anselm's response focuses on his position that God alone cannot be conceived not to exist. Anything else can be so conceived. Therefore the argument works only in the case of God.” (Gaunilo)

According to Genesis 5:1-2 when “God created man, he made him in the likeness of God, and he created them male and female and blessed them. (Zondervan, 2005)” Because the human race was created in God's likeness and God is a perfect being, the entire human population

descriptive

should be deemed perfect beings as well. In terms of man being perfect because God is perfect as said in Gaunilo's argument, I would agree. In response to Gaunilo's argument that "Anselm's focuses on his position that God alone cannot be conceived not to exist. Anything else can be so conceived. Therefore the argument works only in the case of God." I feel that that is not necessarily true. In saying that anything, but God can be conceived, he is practically creating a division between the greatness of God and all other things. According to the bible, man is created in the likeness of God meaning, they are in a way equal to God. For that reason based on Anselm's argument, it cannot be said that God is a perfect being and for that reason he must exist.

In the Christian faith there is a parable of a man who calls on God to save him because he is in a situation that will cause him to die if he does not get help. Along comes a man who offers to help him. The man's response to the offer was "No thank you, I am waiting for God to save me". So the man who offered his help left the man there, still in need of help. After he left, another and another came to offer the man their help, but each time he responded saying "No thank you, I am waiting for God to save me". Eventually the man died and upon his entry into heaven, he asked God why he didn't save him. God responded by saying "I sent you all the help you needed, but you did not accept it." It is to be said that God sometimes come in the form of a human being as he did in the story. As part of humanity, it is nearly impossible for any being to be perfect. For this reason it is difficult to prove the existence of God through perfection.

On the other hand, who is to say that something or someone is perfect or imperfect for that matter? The definition of perfection may vary based upon perception so what may be perfect to one person may be an abomination to another. For that reason, it is also difficult to say that God is or is not perfect.

general,
descriptive

Aquinas's Criticisms

Along with Gaunilo, St Thomas Aquinas criticized the Ontological of St Anselm with the belief that God's existence is self-evident yet he rejected the idea that it can be deduced from claims about the concept of God. "Aquinas argued, plausibly enough, that "not everyone who hears this word 'God' understands it to signify something than which nothing greater can be thought, seeing that some have believed God to be a body" (Gould, 1995). The idea here is that, since different people have different concepts of God, this argument works, if at all, only to convince those who define the notion of God in the same way" (Gould, 1995). He also argued that even if we assume that everyone shares the same concept of God as a being than which none greater can be imagined, "it does not therefore follow that he understands what the word signifies exists actually, but only that it exists mentally" (Gould, 1995).

With Aquinas, I concur that the existence of God cannot be proven with the notion that claims about him, prove that he does exist. I also agree that even with a common understanding of the concept of God, it still cannot be proven that he exist because it becomes a more mental note of knowing what the term 'God' connote, but it does not necessarily say that God exist with common understanding because it is still a mental notion and understanding of what God signify not that he actually exist. However I do not agree that when people hear the name or word 'God' they do not think of a higher power. In fact, when anyone hears the word 'God' the first thing that comes to mind is a higher power. Even with that said the existence of God is not being proven with reason or with anything else for that matter. It is simply argued that there are thoughts and claims about God but nothing that can prove his existence.

descriptive, limited use of secondary source

The Transcendental Argument

The Transcendental argument has been given by Kant in order to prove the existence of God can be proven with reason. This attempts to prove that “the Christian God is the precondition of all human knowledge and experience, by demonstrating the impossibility of the contrary; in other words, that logic, reason, or morality cannot exist without God. (Enotes.com, nd)” In Genesis 1:26-28 of the Zondervan version of the Christian bible, “God said “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. (Zondervan, 2005)” According to the bible God created the man and woman, whom populated the world by reproducing.

Theoretically, in order for reason, faith and experience to create knowledge, humans must believe in order to create faith, think for reason, and experience life for experience. Humans were able to think, believe and experience because they were created by God, therefore reason, faith and experience cannot exist without God. “Knowledge is possible (or some other statement pertaining to logic or morality). If there is no God, knowledge is not possible. Therefore God exists. (Enotes.com, nd)”

↳ Technically speaking, God created one man and one woman in order for them to populate the world. After the creation on them, the creation of life depended on them, not God. In reality, our knowledge, religion, and experiences exist only because other human, who is not God either gave them to us or they set it up for us to receive them on our own.

As a human, I believe in God because I was told to do so as a child and from there I never

doubted my belief in God. All of the knowledge I have accumulated in my life time has been taught to me by either a school teacher or a figure of authority such as my parents and other members of my family. All of my experiences occurred due to my environment, in which I am surrounded by other human beings. As a human I am able to receive all of these things from other human beings, like myself, because God gave me the opportunity by giving life to the first human being who eventually gave me life.

As a thinker I feel that the argument is in a way valid in terms of proving the existence of God through the use of a logical thought process from a religious stand point, but as of now, there is no physical evidence that supports the existence of God, so one cannot yet say that the existence of God can be proven with reason. However there are claims of his existence.

According to the Transcendental argument the existence of God is a precondition for all human knowledge, religion, and experience, which appears to be true. Though everything humans know and experience does not come from God directly, God is needed in order to create the first two humans that would populate the world and educate the people in it.

Pascal's argument

"It is better to believe in God's existence than to deny it."(Blaise Pascal). Pascal states that "there is no rational proof for or against God's existence. Nonetheless, one must choose to believe or not. Hence, why not wager on the belief that will bring one the most happiness?

(Gould, 1995)"With this argument, the existence of God can neither be proven or disproven, but sets a neutral balance. In reality God does not take the form of a human being that everyone who believes in him can see. He appears to people of different religions in multiple different ways. In the Christian faith God appears in some form through his son Jesus who is to his believers the

descriptive, enumerative ← *approach development*

messiah.

In the Islamic religion God appears as Allah. For a long time and possibly to this very day, people of the Christian faith believe that the Muslims that worship in the Islamic faith believe that the God they are serving is different from the one they serve. Because of this notion, some Christians believe that it is wrong to believe in anyone but God because it disobeys the commandments; "You shall have no other gods before me" and "You shall not make for yourself an idol whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents (Zondervan, 2005)". In Arabic, Allah means literally the one God. In reality Muslims believe in the same God as Christians and they actually go by the same word as Christians. Muslims go by the Old Testament in which God is the only God. Jesus, the son of God, appears for the first time in the New Testament. Christians believe in both testaments of the bible.

In the Islamic faith Jesus is a prophet as is Muhammad because God is the almighty God and for that reason did not bear any children. In the Christian faith Jesus is the son of God and through him, along with the children of God, God appears to his believers. Due to ignorance, the fact that God is the same in both religions does not appear to be known between both faiths. Despite religious differences between both religions, neither believer from either religion can say that God himself has appeared to them in a physical human form. Although God does not take a physical form for believers to worship, he is greatly believed in by majority of the human population.

Because a group of people believe in something, it is assumed that their beliefs must be true or correct ergo, all of these people could not be wrong and it is only right for one to believe

needs detail, analysis...

general; vague at moments

as well. With no proof of existence, people believe simply because other people believe it. As stated in the argument made by Blaise Pascal it is better to believe than not believe. It seems as though in the world of today one must agree with what everyone else is saying and believing in order to prevent direct or indirect harsh criticism from those whose criticism is unexpected. If someone was to tell a believer they believe in the same thing they believe in, no question as to why they believe will be asked. If a nonbeliever says they do not believe, the reasoning for this would be misunderstood, and for that reason alone questioned. It just seems to be easier to believe without question than to not believe or question the beliefs of those who do worship God.

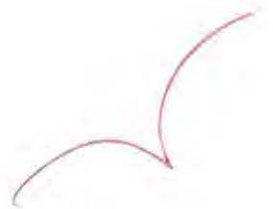
In both religions we see that claims are made about a higher 'power' or 'God' but there is not any physical evidence to prove or disprove the existence of God. Yet there seems to be no need for physical evidence in order to believe. In fact, this argument does not attempt to prove or disprove the existence of God with reason, simply because it was not the intent of the philosopher.

descriptive development

Kierkegaard's argument

Soren Kierkegaard believes that attempts to prove God's existence from reason and experience are impossible. He argues that "such proofs don't prove existence, but at most provide only a conception of God. (Gould, 1995)" As a thinker, I would have to agree with this argument. The existence of God heavily relies on the existence of religion rather than reason and experience. In addition to that, in order to prove a claim to be true with reason one must be able to provide evidence, which is the very thing other philosophers fail to present. In terms of reason, it is hard to say that God exist through it because it is a universal concept while the notion of the existence of God varies depending on religion. As far as experience is concerned, people say that miracles were performed and the only possible conclusion would be that God performed them. An example of this may be someone who is dying of cancer is miraculously healed from it. In this situation, the use of treatments and the simple fact that the human body tends to heal itself is ruled out and the only cause of this recovery is God, though he has never physically touched this person to heal them nor have he ever been seen. Then and again, both reason and experience can be hard to explain to a person who has not experienced what you have experienced already. One cannot say that another's experiences are false because they have not experienced the same or because they do not believe in the same things in the exact same way.

short account of Kierkegaard's views



Conclusion

Because the existence of God is heavily reliant on faith and personal belief, the existence of God can neither be proven nor disproven with the use of reason or experience for that matter. As stated earlier, reason is a universal concept while the notion of the existence of God varies depending on their personal religious beliefs. It is impossible to say that the existence of God can be proven with reason, experience, knowledge, perfection or even religion because all these things vary greatly between people of all different types and with different backgrounds. In order to prove anything, evidence is needed to support it. Due to the lack of evidence in religion, nothing can be proven or disproven about the existence of God with the use of reason; however claims about the existence of God are and can be formulated by belief. So as a thinker and a knower I would conclude by saying that the existence of God can neither be proven nor disproven with the use of reason because the reasons for his existence vary too much, though reason is a universal concept.

*Secondary sources used
Descriptive, linear, enumerative approach and development
A sort of general summary in*

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general sources
(no specific ones (authors!))