Just the Arguments

Edited by

Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone

JUST THE ARGUMENTS

100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy

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In Memory of Mark Bruce (1961–2001). Never Forget.

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We also wish to acknowledge our respective partners, Karen Hull and Stephen Russell, for their somehow managing to endure us while we absented ourselves to prepare this manuscript.

Introduction: Show Me the Arguments

Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone

"We are going to ruin undergraduate philosophy." That was what we told our friends and teachers when we pitched the idea of this book to them. It was our experience that for almost any given philosophy class that we took as undergraduates, there were only a handful of arguments, totaling no more than a few pages of carefully crafted notes, that we needed to know. We imagined a rolodex of arguments in front of us, which we could spin through with ease to find the argument and move on. Midterm or final examinations in one of these classes would be reduced to presenting a philosopher's argument, followed by a critique – usually another philosopher's argument. The ability to state an argument clearly and concisely, in a term paper, for example, demonstrates that one succinctly understands the material. The following arguments can be viewed as answers to such test questions and also to some of life's questions as well.

"Show me the argument" is the battle cry for philosophers. Everyone has subjective personal experiences, sentiments, and opinions, so philosophy appeals to the common ground of reason to evaluate claims objectively. Logical reasoning is independent of political and religious commitments. Put simply, an argument is valid or it is not. (Whether or not it is convincing is another issue.) When one analyzes a position in terms of its argument, one responds with a certain level of rigor and attention. Uncompelling arguments can be dismissed out of hand as absurd and forgotten; however, arguments that evoke strong reactions, often due to the potential consequences of the argument, are countered by a restatement of the initial argument, explicitly displaying the inferences, assumptions, and justifications and why the conclusions do not follow. When things become serious, one wants *just the arguments*.

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The time has long passed when it was possible for one to read the entire Western philosophical canon. Philosophy needs new didactic tools to address the fact that the quantity of influential arguments will increase while the number of hours that a student at any level has will remain relatively the same. Philosophy as a formal discipline will increasingly need to "get smart" about how it selects which arguments deserve more attention than others in the classroom and then how to teach them. Outside of the classroom, there are little-to-no resources that function as study guides. Detailed study guides are made for everything – the Bible, calculus, grammar, biology – except for philosophy. There are laminated sheets in bookstores that list all the standard mathematical equations, sheets that have common Spanish verbs, and even one on "Golf for Women," but not one has arguments on the existence of God, free will, or moral responsibility. Many books present important philosophical arguments, but it is often the case that these books outline only a single argument or a string of related arguments. Encyclopedias of philosophy are great for limited descriptions of philosophers and concepts, but there is a need for reference tools that offer specific arguments. In the end, these secondary sources often bury the argument in commentary and analysis and do not lend themselves to concise and efficient referencing. It can take just as long to find an argument in the analysis as it would to go to the original text. This volume acts as a compact and accessible companion to both sources.

It deserves to be underscored that this volume showcases 100 of the most important arguments and that this list is not exhaustive or uncontroversial. This is the first project of its kind. There are not standardized accounts of arguments that are univocally accepted in the field. Experts in every field disagree – perhaps even more so in philosophy. Arguments that are valued now may not be considered to be as equally important in the future. Even when there is an agreement that an argument is important, it can be far from clear how the argument goes or what the correct conclusion is. Authors in this volume have selected representative quotations in support of their versions of the arguments. The following arguments are not ranked against each other as more or less important. Aquinas' Five Ways should not be considered more important than other arguments based on the fact that it comes first. There are many more, important arguments that are not included here, and we hope to provide these in forthcoming installments.

We have selected arguments that an undergraduate philosophy major would be likely to encounter, though many of the issues arise in general education classes outside of philosophy. A majority of the arguments employ intuitive logical inferences, allowing readers without formal training in logic to follow the argument. The inference rule used to draw each conclusion is named to enable the reader to see explicitly the argument's valid structure. We provide an overview of the inferences in the appendices. There are a

few arguments that require a more advanced understanding of logic, and readers will benefit from the introduction and commentary that provide the general strategy.

This volume is divided into six parts: philosophy of religion, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind, and philosophies of science and language. There are more branches of philosophy than there are sections in the volume, and there are other important arguments within the given domains than those presented here. It is common that arguments in one area are also important and influence arguments in another. Many arguments could have been included in multiple sections. These divisions are provisional, and arguments will reference related arguments in the book, signaled by "#" and then the number of the argument. The bibliographic information in each article will also be instructive for further reading. The following are introductions to the arguments in the form of the questions that they address. In other words, we provide the questions that would naturally lead one to the argument. For example, "Is change real (#14)?" directs readers to the article "Parmenides' Refutation of Change," argument #14.

Philosophy of Religion

What were Aquinas' "Five Ways" to prove the existence of God (#1)? Must there be at least one self-existent being that explains why there is something rather than nothing (#2)? If something begins to exist, then does it have a cause (#3)? If God is something than which nothing greater can be thought, does that mean that God must exist in reality (#4)? What was Pascal's Wager (#5)? Is it rational to have religious belief without sufficient evidence (#6)? Does the existence of evil in the world disprove the existence of God (#7)? What if God permits evil so that humans have the greater good of free will (#8)? Does free will entail the power to sin (#9)? Is it justifiable to believe in a miracle on the basis of empirical evidence (#10)? Is what is holy holy because the gods approve it, or do they approve it because it is holy (#11)? What did Nietzsche mean when he said "God is dead" and where does this leave truth (#12)? What is Ockham's Razor (#13)?

Metaphysics

Is change real (#14)? If change is not real, then is time real (#15)? Are only things that are perceived real (#16)? How did Kant argue against this kind of idealism and skepticism (#17)? What is the relationship between necessity and possibility in terms of the past, present, and future (#18)? If things

could have been different in the past, does that mean that there are different possible worlds (#19)? What are "persons" and what makes a person maintain her numerical identity over time (#20)? Is there a decisive factor – for example, body mass, brain mass, or memories – for personal identity (#21)? In what way do things both persist over time and change (#22, 23)? Do humans have nonbodily immaterial parts called souls (#24)? Is it irrational to fear death (#25)? How do we know things if they are in constant flux (#26)? How did Aristotle argue against Plato's Forms (#27)? Is the same logical theory to be applied in all domains, or do different domains require different logics (#28)? Can there be a totality of true propositions without running into paradoxes (#29)? What is the connection between free will and moral responsibility (#30)? Do I have free will only if I had the option to do otherwise (#31)? Are free will and determinism compatible (#32)? If everything is either going to happen or not, isn't fatalism tenable (#33)? How does Sartre's existentialism – "Man is condemned to be free" – enter into the conversation (#34)?

Epistemology

How do I know that I exist (#35)? Am I certain that I am not dreaming (#36)? Am I directly conscious of features of sensations or experiences (#37)? Does every belief need to be justified by other beliefs and will that lead to an infinite regress (#38)? Isn't there a commonsense response to skepticism (#39)? If there can be no justified procedure for normatively distinguishing among competing epistemic views, then are all accounts are epistemically equal (#40)? How does the traditional account of knowledge being a true justified belief fail (#41)? Is something true solely because people agree that it is true (#42)? Is it possible to differentiate knowledge or experience between a conceptual component and an empirical component (#43)? Is there a sharp division between analytic truths and synthetic truths (#44)? Is there a rational justification for inductive inferences and the foundation of modern science (#45)? If things are similar in certain observable or identified cases, are they are also similar in some other unobservable or unidentified cases (#46)? Should philosophy look to science to explain and justify our knowledge of the world (#47)? Are some cognitive states in direct contact with reality and form a firm foundation that supports the rest of our knowledge (#48, #49)? Are there limitations to what reasoning can accomplish (#50)?

Ethics

Does the just life bring happiness (#51)? Is the happy life one in accord with reason (#52)? Is the Good one thing or many (#53)? What is the best pos-

sible life that a person can lead (#54)? Did Kant have an argument for the categorical imperative (#55)? And why did he think that autonomy deserves respect (#56)? Should the Good be conceived of in terms of utility (#57)? Are humans just hedonists, who champion pleasure over everything else (#58)? Is all morality relative or are there objective principles across cultures (#59)? Can the good be defined (#60)? Should we accept the authority of the state (#61)? Is taxation forced labor (#62)? Do we have a moral duty to give to charity (#63)? Would it be better if, in the future, a greater rather than lesser number of people lived (#64)? Is a great loss to one person justified by smaller benefits to a great many others (#65)? Is it better to bring everyone down to the same level than to accept an inequality (#66)? Does justice demand preserving a patterned distribution of property (#67)?

What are the central arguments of liberal feminism (#68)? What is the moral status of marginal cases; that is, when is there not a clearly drawn line between human and nonhuman animals (#69)? What is the most robust argument in favor of vegetarianism (#70)? What does a famous violin player have to do with the most discussed argument in the abortion debate (#71)? Is abortion immoral due to the loss of future experiences, activities, projects, and enjoyments (#72)? Does something need to be able to desire or conceive of something in order to have the right to something; for example, life (#73)? Is there an ethical difference between active and passive euthanasia (#74)?

Philosophy of Mind

Is the mind a blank slate or are there innate ideas (#75)? What is Cartesian dualism and is the mind distinct from the body (#76)? What is the mind–body problem (#77)? What is property dualism and how is it different than substance dualism (#78)? Are mental events identical with physical events (#79, #80)? Is every mental property realized in exactly one physical way (#81)? How does the nonphysical mind move the physical body (#82)? Do I have privileged access to my mental states and can I know the mental states of others (#83)? Does physicalism capture all the essential facts of experience (#84, #85)? If a zombie world is metaphysically possible, how would that critique physicalism (#86)? Does the sensation of color reveal intrinsic features about color (#87)? If a computer had the right programs, would it have a mind; in other words, is true artificial intelligence possible (#88)?

Science and Language

How do we discern science from pseudo-science (#89)? Do scientific paradigms build from previous ones; that is, are they commensurable (#90)? Is

the shift from one paradigm to another a rational process (#90)? Is scientific realism the only way that makes progress in science and technology not miraculous (#91)? How did Galileo know that all objects fall at the same rate of speed regardless of their respective weights without experimenting (#92)? If a theory is fallible, should it be eliminated (#93)?

Is there such a thing as a completely private language (#94)? Does learning a language require learning a rule (#95)? Does learning a rule require learning a language (#96)? When there is translation, is there also interpretation (#97, #98)? If there are true statements that contain abstract objects, does that mean those abstract objects exist (#99)? Is mathematical Platonism the best way to explain mathematical knowledge (#100)?

How to Use This Book

In the boxed area that precedes the arguments, you will find a reference list of original and secondary sources.

Block quotations are provided to show how the argument is presented in the text.

P1. Premises are marked "P."
P2. A premise is a statement that is either true or false and is given as evidence or a reason for accepting the conclusion; a conclusion is the statement that is argued for and supported by the premises.
  C1. Conclusions, of which there may be many, are marked with "C" and are indented. Conclusion indicators – for example, "therefore" and "hence" – have been omitted. The rule of inference or replacement is listed after deductive conclusions.

Part I

Philosophy of Religion

1

Aquinas' Five Ways

Timothy J. Pawl

All quotations from Aquinas are taken from Alfred Freddoso's translation of the *Summa theologiae*, available online at www.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/TOC-part1.htm

Baisnee, Jules. "St. Thomas Aquinas's Proofs of the Existence of God Presented in Their Chronological Order," in *Philosophical Studies in Honor of the Very Reverend Ignatius Smith, O.P.*, edited by John K. Ryan, 29–64. Westminster: The Newman Press, 1952.

Bochenski, Joseph M. "The Five Ways," in *The Rationality of Theism*, edited by Adolfo García de la Sienra, 61–92. Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000.

Kenny, Anthony. *The Five Ways: Saint Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Pawl, Timothy. "The Five Ways," in *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Aquinas*, edited by Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–74) offered his Five Ways, or five proofs for the existence of God, near the beginning of his *magnum opus*, the *Summa theologiae* (Part 1, Question 2, Article 3, the response). The *Summa* (ST), as it is often called, was written as a textbook for men in their priestly formation. It is well over 2,500 pages in a standard English translation from the Latin, but the Five Ways take up only slightly more than one page.

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Nevertheless, they are almost assuredly the most commented on section of the *Summa* and some of the most well-known arguments for the existence of God.

One should note that while each Way concludes with some variation of "and this we call God," Aquinas did not intend the Five Ways to be demonstrations of a uniquely Christian God. In fact, he warns against attempts to prove, for instance, that God is triune (three persons but one being, as Christians affirm), since such arguments, he explains, will fall short and lead unbelievers to scoff (see his *Summa contra gentiles*, Book 1, Chapter 9, paragraph 2). Furthermore, Aquinas did not take the Five Ways to show that this thing we call "God" is perfect, good, immutable, eternal, powerful, knowledgeable, or even that there is just one such thing. As a consequence, some common criticisms of the Ways – for instance, that they do not demonstrate an omnipotent being – clearly miss the mark. Aquinas goes on later to devote many pages to whether the thing we call "God" in the Five Ways is omnipotent. And the same is true for the other abovementioned attributes. Rather, Aquinas' intent in the Five Ways is to show that there is something-or-other that, for instance, causes things but is itself uncaused, or something that is necessary and does not have that necessary existence from another. In fact, he does not argue that the Five Ways conclude to the same thing – rather than five different things – until later in the *Summa* (Part 1, Question 11, Article 3, the response).

Finally, it is important to note that while the Five Ways are Aquinas' most often cited arguments for the existence of God, they are not his most detailed or nuanced. The *Summa*, as said above, is a textbook of sorts, and written for an audience of common men in formation for the priesthood – not academics, scholars, atheists, or agnostics. To judge Aquinas' best and most powerful arguments for the existence of God, one would do better to look at the parallel passages from his other works rather than at his *Summa* (see Baisnee for a helpful list of these passages). That said, it is the arguments in the *Summa* that have received the most attention and have become, by any reasonable standard, some of the most important arguments in the Western intellectual tradition.

The First Way – The Argument from Motion

The First Way focuses on motion. By "motion," Aquinas means the three sorts of accidental change that Aristotle differentiates: change of location (e.g., moving across the room), change in quality (e.g., heating up), and change in quantity (e.g., getting fatter). The general thrust of the argument is that anything changed in one of these ways is changed by something else. That something else, in changing the first thing, either is itself changed or

remains changeless. A series of changing changers cannot proceed infinitely. So there must be some first, unchanging being. That being we call "God."

The argument below uses 'F' as a variable governing end states of being correlated with the three sorts of motion mentioned above. For instance, one could substitute "across the room," "hot," or "fat" for F. Aquinas provides three detailed defenses of C3 in the *Summa contra gentiles*, Part 1, Chapter 13. He considers the common objection that a thing can move itself (e.g., the runner moves himself when sprinting from the starting line) by saying that such cases are instances of a part moving a whole and not a thing moving itself. In P3, Aquinas says that the mover must be in a state of actuality relevant to F in order to make something F. The argument would be more forceful if Aquinas could say that the mover must be actually F, but he cannot say that, at least not with perfect generality. For Aquinas thinks that God can move things in many ways that God is not actually: God can fatten a man without himself being fat. In that case, God is said to be virtually F, where something is "virtually F" if it is not itself F but it has the power to make others F. One may say, then, that something is in a state of actuality relevant to F when it is either actually F or virtually F.

> It is certain, and obvious to the senses, that in this world some things are moved. But everything that is moved is moved by another. For nothing is moved except insofar as it is in potentiality with respect to that actuality toward which it is moved, whereas something effects motion insofar as it is in actuality in a relevant respect. After all, to effect motion is just to lead something from potentiality into actuality. But a thing cannot be led from potentiality into actuality except through some being that is in actuality in a relevant respect; for example, something that is hot in actuality – say, a fire – makes a piece of wood, which is hot in potentiality, to be hot in actuality, and it thereby moves and alters the piece of wood. But it is impossible for something to be simultaneously in potentiality and in actuality with respect to same thing; rather, it can be in potentiality and in actuality only with respect to different things. For what is hot in actuality cannot simultaneously be hot in potentiality; rather, it is cold in potentiality. Therefore, it is impossible that something should be both mover and moved in the same way and with respect to the same thing, or, in other words, that something should move itself. Therefore, everything that is moved must be moved by another.
>
> If, then, that by which something is moved is itself moved, then it, too, must be moved by another, and that other by still another. But this does not go on to infinity. For if it did, then there would not be any first mover and, as a result, none of the others would effect motion, either. For secondary movers effect motion only because they are being moved by a first mover, just as a stick does not effect motion except because it is being moved by a hand. Therefore, one has to arrive at some first mover that is not being moved by anything. And this is what everyone takes to be God. (ST I, q2, a3, response)

P1. Some things are moved.
P2. If something is moved to being F, then it is potentially but not actually F.
P3. If something moves a thing to be F, then it (the mover) is in a state of actuality relevant to F.
  C1. If something were to move itself to be F (e.g., be both moved and its own mover), then it would be both potentially but not actually F and also in a state of actuality relevant to F (conjunction, and *modus ponens*, P1, P2, P3).
P4. But it is not possible for something to be both potentially but not actually F and also in a state of actuality relevant to F.
  C2. It is not possible for something to move itself to be F (*modus tollens,* C1, P4).
P5. If it is not possible for something to move itself to be F, then if something is moved, it is moved by something else.
  C3. If something is moved, it is moved by something else (*modus ponens*, C2, P5).
P5. If B moves A and B is moved, then B must be moved by some other thing, C. And if C is moved, then C must be moved by still some other thing, D. And so on.
P6. If the series of movers were to go on to infinity, then there would be no first mover.
P7. If there were no first mover, then there would be no motion.
  C4. There is a first mover (*modus tollens*, P1, P7).
  C5. That first mover is the thing that everyone takes to be God (definition).

The Second Way – The Argument from Causation

Whereas the First Way focused on accidental changes, the Second Way focuses on ordered series of efficient causation. An efficient cause is that which produces something or an alteration in something. The composer is the efficient cause of the sonata; the fire is the efficient cause of the heating of the kettle. An ordered series is a series in which the causal work of later members in the series depends on the simultaneous causal work of earlier members in the series. If the fire heats the kettle and the kettle heats the water, it is an ordered series, since the kettle's heating the water depends upon the causal activity of the earlier cause, the fire. Likewise, a system of gears is an ordered causal series, since the causal action of one intermediate gear spinning another, later gear depends upon the causal activity of previous gears in the system. Aquinas argues in the Second Way, to continue with the gear image, that the system cannot be gears all the way back. An

infinite series of gears, without a first cause of their spinning, would not be in motion.

> We find that among sensible things there is an ordering of efficient causes, and yet we do not find – nor is it possible to find – anything that is an efficient cause of its own self. For if something were an efficient cause of itself, then it would be prior to itself – which is impossible.
>
> But it is impossible to go on to infinity among efficient causes. For in every case of ordered efficient causes, the first is a cause of the intermediate and the intermediate is a cause of the last – and this regardless of whether the intermediate is constituted by many causes or by just one. But when a cause is removed, its effect is removed. Therefore, if there were no first among the efficient causes, then neither would there be a last or an intermediate. But if the efficient causes went on to infinity, there would not be a first efficient cause, and so there would not be a last effect or any intermediate efficient causes, either – which is obviously false. Therefore, one must posit some first efficient cause – which everyone calls God. (ST I, q2, a3, response)

P1. There is an ordered series of efficient causes.
P2. Necessarily, if X is an efficient cause of Y, then X is prior to Y.
  C1. Necessarily, if X is an efficient cause of X, then X is prior to X (instantiation, P2).
P3. It is not possible for X to be prior to X.
  C2. It is not possible for X to be an efficient cause of itself (*modus tollens*, C1, P3).
P4. If something is an ordered series of efficient causes, then the first cause causes the intermediate cause(s), and the intermediate cause(s) cause(s) the last effect.
P5. If a cause is removed from an ordered series of efficient causes, then the effects after that cause are removed as well.
  C3. If there were no first cause, then there would be no subsequent effects (instantiation, P4, P5).
P6. If an ordered series of efficient causes could precede infinitely, then there would be no first cause.
  C4. If an ordered series of efficient causes could precede infinitely, then there would be no subsequent effects (hypothetical syllogism, C3, P6).
P7. But there are subsequent effects.
  C5. An ordered series of efficient causes cannot precede infinitely (*modus tollens*, C4, P7).
P8. An ordered series of efficient causes either precedes infinitely, terminates in a cause that causes itself, or terminates in an uncaused cause.
  C6. An ordered series of efficient causation terminates in an uncaused cause (disjunctive syllogism, C2, C5, P8).
  C7. We call that uncaused cause "God" (definition).

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