

Augustine

In Augustine's writing, *The Confessions*, he philosophically attempts to answer the problems that arise within religion, specifically in regards to Judeo Christian beliefs, pertaining to God, time, and creation. Augustine first addresses the belief that God created everything. He tries to provide a coherent explanation for his claim that God's ex-nihilo ("out of nothing") creation of the Earth is a sound statement, given that God created everything, and with it time. Thus, the notion of time never existed before its very point of creation.

However, given that God created everything, and thus the universe, what was God doing before the universe's creation that caused him to decide to create it or that it was now necessary as opposed to before. Furthermore, if God even had to make the decision whether or not the universe's existence was necessary, making him arbitrary, wouldn't that inherently falsify the claim that God is a perfect being (omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent) and thus is immutable. Augustine objects this claim by stating that God is eternal, in that he is timeless, and so exists outside the realm of time. He is therefore not bound (or defined) by any temporal concept. So, when faced with the problem of what God was doing before he created the universe, Augustine simply claims it is an illogical question. He justifies that if one accepts the belief that God is eternal and created everything, than one can't logically ask what God was doing at a certain point before the creation of time itself, as it was not yet in existence.

Augustine continues the debate on time, by calling its very existence into question. Augustine questions the commonly accepted notion of time by providing his theory of "presentism," which basically reduces time into only the present tense. Augustine claims that when people talk in terms of the

past, present, and future they're only really talking about various forms of the present. Augustine tries to explain the various complications that arise when trying to determine the duration of present time. It is difficult to compare two different measurements of time if each period of "present" time given can be reduced into a minute instance of time that quickly disappears. So, one cannot measure something that has happened, because once it is in the past, it no longer exists.

Augustine accepts that there appears to be an irrational aspect of presentism, in that by accepting the present as the only form of time, one would then seemingly have to agree that it wouldn't make sense to refer to any moment of time occurring in either the past or the future. Augustine rationalizes any reference to the past, by defining it as the mind's ability to recall imprinted memories of images left in the mind through the medium of one's senses. Similarly, the foreseeing of future events is merely the act of prediction based off of things that were already present or previously seen (i.e. the assertion that the sun will rise tomorrow is only based on one's own previous experience of having already watched the sun rise). Augustine acknowledges the apparent existence of past and future events, and answers the discrepancy by providing alternate terms to use in place of the existing tenses, which are the present of past things, the present of present things, and the present of future things. Furthermore, he redefines the definitions of his terms to mean that the present of past things is memory, the present of present things is attention, and the present of future things is expectation.

Augustine continues the problem of measuring time, by recognizing that it would be impossible to measure something, which is not yet real, travels through what doesn't occupy space, only to become something that is no longer real. He first tries to use the notion that time can be measured in relation to a corporeal object, such as the sun (i.e. a day). Yet, this method is rejected, because if one were to change the time it takes for the sun to rotate the Earth, the time allotted to a day would still remain the same, even if the sun were to set multiple times within a "days" time frame. Thus, he states that if the motion

of any corporeal object is one thing, but the standard in which we measure it is another, time can not be based off of any movement of a corporeal object. He then replaces this method of measurement with the example of sound, explaining that because we can measure time based on our voice, surely we can measure any interval of time based off any beginning and end. However, he claims that when measuring any form of sound, we are only measuring the impression the sound left on the mind, and thus are only measuring the impression left, not the time itself.

Augustine then deduces that time is only produced from memories of impressions. Thus, time is nothing more than a manmade phenomenon that exists only within the realm of the human mind. He explains that this phenomenon exists within the mind in three different forms of reality. The three realities of the mind are comprised of when the mind expects, attends, or remembers. In other words, that what the mind expects, passes by way of what it attends, into being what it remembers. Furthermore, it is only our attention that endures, through which what is still to be makes its way into the state of where it is no more. Therefore, our attention is continually present, as the future is being passed through the present and changes into the past. Augustine concludes that it is this “tension” or flow that constitutes time, in that time can only be understood in terms of a manmade psychological phenomenon.

For Augustine, his philosophical conclusion that time doesn’t exist in any tangible way but is merely a product of the human mind, justifies the claim that God’s existence is outside the realm of human’s perception of time. Augustine expects that from the acceptance of this notion of time, God’s exemption from time in no way means that he is deficient or more limited than humans in any aspect, but that conversely, he is more powerful.

Aquinas

Aquinas argues the problem of God's existence in three ways: First, he addresses whether or not the existence of God is self-evident, second, whether or not his existence can be demonstrated and, finally, whether or not God actually exists. In addressing the issue of whether or not God's existence is self-evident, Aquinas provides three objections in support of the argument. However, the objections are fundamentally flawed based on the premise that one can intellectually declare God doesn't exist. However, in response, Aquinas counters this notion by redefining the ways in which something can be self-evident into two different categories. He says something can be self-evident in itself and not to us or both itself and us. Therefore, some concepts involving incorporeal substances can only be learned. Also, because God is His own existence, the proposition is no longer one that is self-evident. Thus, God's self-evident existence can only be proven through demonstrating the natural things known to us, such as his affects; or, it is simply a *prima facie* presumption. Aquinas provides the objections to his assertion, which accepts the fact that not everyone defines happiness or God in the same ways, or that Primal Truths are self-evident.

Aquinas then discusses whether or not God's existence can be proven by demonstration. He provides the objection that it can't, on the fact that God's existence is based entirely on faith, and that His essence can only be defined in terms of what He is not. Lastly, that no cause can be demonstrated by an affect that isn't proportional. Aquinas answers, saying that God's existence can be demonstrated in two ways. The first being through a priori methods, in which knowledge can be obtained without the need of experience, as seen with Anselm's Ontological argument which proves the existence of God using a definition. The second way, which for Aquinas is the only legitimate way, is through a posteriori methods, in which any knowledge used must be gained through experience.

Aquinas adheres to Aristotelian ideas, claiming that there is nothing in the intellect that didn't once exist in the senses, and thus rejects that God's existence could be demonstrated through any means

other than those acquired through experience. For Aquinas, every effect must be the result of an inherent cause. So, one can prove God's existence to be self-evident by demonstrating his existence based off the effects he produces. Aquinas continues by claiming that nothing prevents a man from understanding evidence demonstrated scientifically. Therefore, because God can be defined and proven in terms of his effects, we can conclude that God's existence can be demonstrated.

In order to attack the objections to the next question of whether or not God exists, Aquinas provides the proof of God's existence with, The First Way, which is one of five. The First Way is the most visible and is based of the a posteriori argument of motion. Aquinas assumes that everyone can accept that within the world some things are in motion (as they can be observed), and that a thing's motion has to have been caused by something other than itself. In other words, except something in motion already in a state of actuality, no motion can be converted from potentiality to actuality without the help of some outside source.

Thus, Aquinas is influenced by the Aristotelian view of change, which is based of the assumption that a substance, defined as being a particular thing with a natural unity that persists yet changes in predictable ways, experiences two different forms of change: accidental and substantial. Accidental change occurs when a substance either loses an accidental form and gains another or gains a form without losing another (i.e. cutting one's hair). Substantial change is the result of something that turns into a whole new being (i.e. a caterpillar into a butterfly). Thus, something that is potentially something else can't simultaneously be that thing in actuality at the same time. For instance water, which is actually a liquid but potentially ice, cannot change its form into being ice without something acting upon it.

Furthermore, building upon Aristotle's views of change, Aquinas asserts that the same rule governing change can also be applied to the argument of movement. Therefore, if in accordance with the

same rule, something in motion cannot simultaneously be both the mover and moved, since something in motion must be put in motion by something other than itself. Thus, in order to find what caused the first movement to occur, one would need to trace the seminal causes of such movement back to, in effect, infinity. However, Aquinas claims it's illogical to accept that the initial force could only be defined in relation to an infinite chain of causes. Consequently, the only sound conclusion would have to include the existence of a first mover, such as something along the lines of an unmoved mover. For Aquinas, the existence of an unmoved mover/unchanged changer proves the existence of a force that could only be God.

Aquinas concludes that only God could be the force behind the existence of some unmoved mover, if motion is created in two different ways. The first is exemplified by the example of some "X" (i.e. a leg) moving some "Y" (i.e. a ball). So, that in this first example, even though "X" causes the movement of "Y," it also follows that "X" is moving too. Subsequently, Aquinas concludes that given the notion that any "X" which is able to cause "Y" to move, while at the same time able to remain motionless, could only be the result of a being "X" equivalent to a much-elevated force that uniquely has to be God.