



The Existence of God

By

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In August of 1993, my friend, Jeff McCain, and I participated in a debate at the Orange County Regional Gathering of Mensa. The topic was the existence of God. Jeff and I took the affirmative position, an Agnostic and an Atheist took the negative position. Jeff presented an inductive, historical argument for the existence of God, and I presented a deductive argument for the existence of God. As I was developing the material for the debate, I began testing it by arguing some points with a number of Atheists and Agnostics on the Internet. To my surprise, in every case, my opponent either outright rejected logic, or tenaciously held on to a logical fallacy, even after knowing it was a fallacy.

The version you have before you is an updated version of the argument. There are more diagrams and charts, and several new sections have been added to answer objections that I have encountered in my debates. I hope you will enjoy this new version. My thanks to all who took the time and thought to enter into debate with me.

Let's Begin -

A common phrase that I hear from would be philosophers is: "No one can prove that God exists." This is usually followed by someone else saying: "Oh yeah! Well, no one can prove He doesn't!" This is not a very well thought out assertion by the unbeliever, but the response of the believer is even worse!

For the unbeliever to make the assertion "No one can prove that God exists" requires one of two possibilities to be true on the unbeliever's part.

1) The unbeliever has examined and found all possible arguments (inductive and deductive) for the existence of God that have ever been offered and could ever be offered to be wanting,

2) The unbeliever has some way of knowing without examining any arguments that it is not possible to prove that God exists.

I personally have never found an unbeliever who has claimed to have examined all possible arguments for the existence of God, nor have

I found one who could give an apriori reason why it is impossible to prove that God exists. This would not mean that one of these two possibilities could not be the case; But the fact that I am offering a logically valid demonstration that God does exist, would suggest that neither is the case.

Let's go back to the believer. The burden of proof does fall to the person making the affirmative statement. This means that the person stating that God exists must show his position to be true. The statement by the believer, "No one can prove God doesn't exist," is quite unacceptable. In other words, he must show that his position accurately reflects reality; that there is a correspondence between what the believer says, and what really is the case. Luckily for the believer, we can demonstrate that God does exist. The person who believes in God does not have to use such lame comebacks as "Nobody can prove that God doesn't exist." However, the believer must take the time to study and research the issues that are being discussed. After you finish studying this paper, when someone says: "You can't demonstrate that God exists!", you can respond: "Sure I can. Let me show you!"

Absolute certainty -

Throughout history theologians and philosophers have presented cosmological, or causal arguments for the existence of God. Such well known names as St. Augustine (5th cent. AD), Rene Descartes (17th cent. AD), and Norman Geisler (20th Cent. AD), as well as many others, hold to the logical validity of such arguments. The advantage that Augustine, Descartes, and Geisler have is that they start from a point of certainty. After this they went into different directions. We will also start with these thinkers, and then we will go our separate way.

The point of certainty we will begin with is our self. Rene Descartes, the French, rationalist, philosopher is famous for the expression "I think, therefore I am." Although he never put it in those exact words, the thought can be found in his book "The Meditations" (I suggest reading at least the first three chapters of "The Meditations"). Descartes' idea is that this expression is the first thing that we can know with certainty. Briefly, his argument runs something like this: Let us take a philosophical journey. We will only affirm as true everything that we can know with certitude. Everything else we will doubt, until we can build a case based upon the thing(s) we can know for certain. We should doubt our senses; for our senses may deceive us, as with optical illusions. We should doubt our idea of the world around us, for even the idea of our own bodies may be false, as in a dream. But, the one thing we can't doubt is that we are doubting; for if we doubt that, we are still doubting. And if you are doubting, then you are thinking; for doubting is thinking. If you are thinking you must exist; for only existing beings can think.

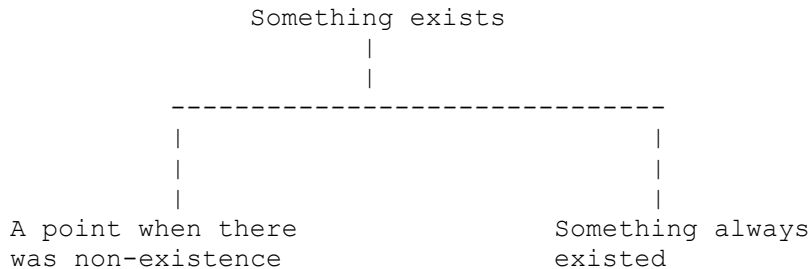
Another way of putting it is: If you can say "I exist," then you know with certainty that you exist, for you must exist to state "I exist." If one does not exist, then that person would not be around to make the statement. Norman Geisler calls this statement an "existentially undeniable" statement (See Geisler's "Philosophy of Religion"). Even if a person tries to deny his own existence, it can easily be proven that their denial is false. The very denial creates a contradiction. For the person must exist to deny that

can readily exclude several of them. Here is a list of all possible explanations for this something that exists:

- 1) Something always existed. In other words, either this something (the universe) always existed, or there was something else that always existed from which this something is derived.
- 2) There was a point when nothing existed.

Let's begin a chart that will help us visualize the relationship of the option.

CHART 1.1



We have set up what is known in logic as a disjunct. That means that there are two options available, and if one is false, then the other is necessarily true.

Allow me to digress for a moment to explain how it works.

Let's say that you and your friend Fred are going to play a little game. You have a penny and Fred has a quarter. These two coins are the only coins in the room. The way to play the game is: First, you turn your back. Next, Fred places one coin in his pants pocket, and the other in his hand, and then closes his hand. The object is for you to guess which coin is in his hand. (You must lead a very dull life if you are playing this game). So, with this being done, you turn and are about to make your guess when you notice the edge of the quarter protruding from Fred's pants pocket. Given that there are two and only two coins in the room, you have disproven that the coin in Fred's hand is the quarter. Therefore, you conclude that the coin in Fred's hand is necessarily (meaning: it must be) the penny. You are right.

If we were to write it out long hand, it would go something like this:

- 1) Either the Penny or the Quarter is in Fred's hand.
- 2) It's not the Quarter (I see that in his pocket).
- 3) Therefore, it's the Penny in his hand.

In logical notation it would look something like this:

Let P = Penny, Let Q = Quarter

- 1) P or Q (Premise)
- 2) Not Q (Premise)
- 3) Therefore P (Conclusion)

The upshot of all this is, if we can demonstrate one of the

If we can prove the leg that asserts "The universe has always existed" is false, then we have demonstrated that the other leg is true (again by disjunctive syllogism).

The attribute of 'always existent being' that we will focus on is infinity. As we discussed above, an always existent being would have to be infinite in its existence. Since the attribute of infinity is inherent to always existing, if we can demonstrate that the universe does not have this attribute, then we have demonstrated that the universe does not fall into the category of "Always existed."

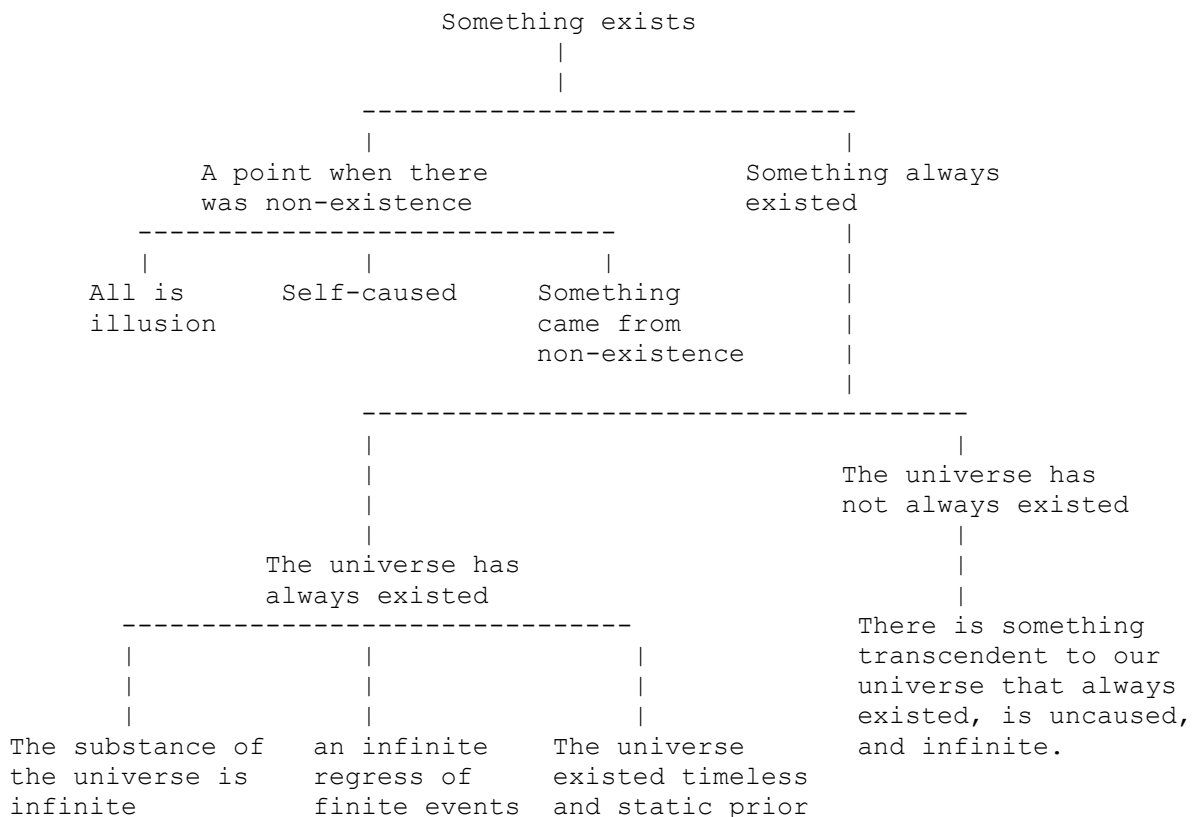
There are three possibilities that are offered under the leg "The universe has always existed," :

- 1) It is possible that the substance, or stuff, or being of this universe is infinite in existence.
- 2) It is possible that there was an infinite regress of finite events.
- 3) It is possible that the universe existed in some form prior to the first motion event, outside of a dimension of time, and in a completely static condition.

If we can demonstrate that these three possibilities are false, then we have demonstrated that the leg is false. As we will see, these three cover all possibilities.

Let's add the three possibilities for an always existing universe to the chart:

CHART 1.4



to 1st motion
event

Let's examine the first two historical options available under this leg. The first one says that the nature, or stuff, or substance of this universe is infinite; it always existed. The changes we see are changes in appearance not in substance. The second option says that the nature, or stuff of the universe is finite, but there was an infinite regress of connected events. Although, no thing or event could be considered infinite in itself, the universe as a whole would have always existed though this infinite, endless chain of cause and effect events.

These two views are different in fundamental points, but they do share one point that is vulnerable to criticism, and shows them to be false. Both views maintain that an infinite number of events have preceded the present event, the event we are experiencing right now. They say that an infinite series of events that stretch out into the past has been traversed or crossed to bring us to the current event we are now experiencing. If we can disprove this point, then both options are shown to be false.

The above position is vulnerable when it claims that an infinite number of events have been completely traversed. In other words, all members of the set we can call 'the past events' have been crossed, and there are no events that can be called 'past events' that have not been crossed. The position also maintains that there is no beginning to the series, thus the claim that the series is infinite.

To show the problem let's try a little theoretical experiment. Let's say we can reverse the logical order of events. So, we would begin going backward, crossing all events in the logical order except reversed.

The infinite universe models say that all past events have been traversed coming forward. So, we should be able to traverse all events going backwards. After all, there are no more events going backward, than are coming forward; there are the exact same number of events. But, if we can traverse all past events going backwards, we will have come to a point when there are no more events to cross. Thus, all events would be traversed. If all events have been traversed going backwards, and no events remain to be traversed, then we will have come to an end. If we come to an end, then the series is finite. You see, an end going backward would be a beginning coming forward, and if it had a beginning it must be finite. If it is finite it is not infinite.

What if we never get to an end going backwards? It would mean that all past events could not be traversed; and if all past events cannot be traversed going backwards, then they could not be traversed coming forwards. The same number of events are involved. If the series of events could not be traversed coming forward, then we would never be able to get to the current event we are experiencing right now. Yet, we are at the present event. Therefore, there are not an infinite number of events.

To summarize: If all past events could be traversed, then the past is not infinite. If the past is infinite then all past events could not be traversed to get us to the present event. Since the latter is patently false (we are at the current event), and the former denies the main premise of the infinite universe, which makes the proposition false, we

can conclude that the two options that maintain an infinite series of past events are both false.

This brings us to the third option. It goes something like this: The universe that is currently in motion existed in some form logically prior to it's being in motion. At that point it was in a state absolutely static (without motion, or event) and absolutely timeless (without a dimension of time).

This option tries to avoid the error of attempting to traverse an actual infinite series of events. If there were no events and no time prior to the first motion event (presumably the big bang), it would be possible for the universe to be placed in the category of "always existed." This is because it could have existed without a beginning, and prior to the first motion event.

For the above to be a real possibility the following two premises must both be possible at the same time.

- 1) There was a point logically prior to the first event.
- 2) Whatever form the universe was in, it was absolutely static and timeless prior to the first event.

Let's examine the proposed first event a little more carefully and see what we can deduce given the premises.

There are three possibilities concerning any event. Either an event is necessary (which means it must happen, and cannot not happen), the event is contingent (it can happen or not happen depending on conditions), or the event is impossible (it cannot happen).

Let's say that given the above scenario the first event was contingent. There would be a point where the conditions needed for the first event were not present, so there would be no first event until the conditions came about for the first event. This gives us the "eternal" point prior to the first event that is suggested. But, this means that conditions would have to change in some way, so that the conditions needed for the first event could come about. But, this change would be an event in itself. So, it would be necessary to have an event precede the first event. This would mean that the first event is not the "first event." It also would deny that the universe was static prior to the "first event." The idea that this first event is contingent allows for premise 1, but denies premise 2.

Let's say that the first event was necessary. This would mean that if the first event could occur, it must occur. If all conditions needed for the first event were always present and there was no contingency, then the event would occur. This would save us from needing an event preceding our first event. However, if all conditions necessary for the first event were present, the event would have occurred without a point logically prior to it, for there would be no point logically prior such that the conditions for the first event were not present. This denies premise 1.

So, we see that given the above scenario, the first event is neither contingent, nor necessary. Therefore, it is an impossible event, given the premises. Since the universe is here, we must conclude that this third option is false.

We may derive something else from the fall of the three above options: Any other attempt to maintain that the universe always existed would have to present a scenario such that the universe could not be always in motion, nor be motionless at some prior point. Given the third law of logic, the law of excluded middle, there is no possibility of any other rational scenario proposing an always existent universe.

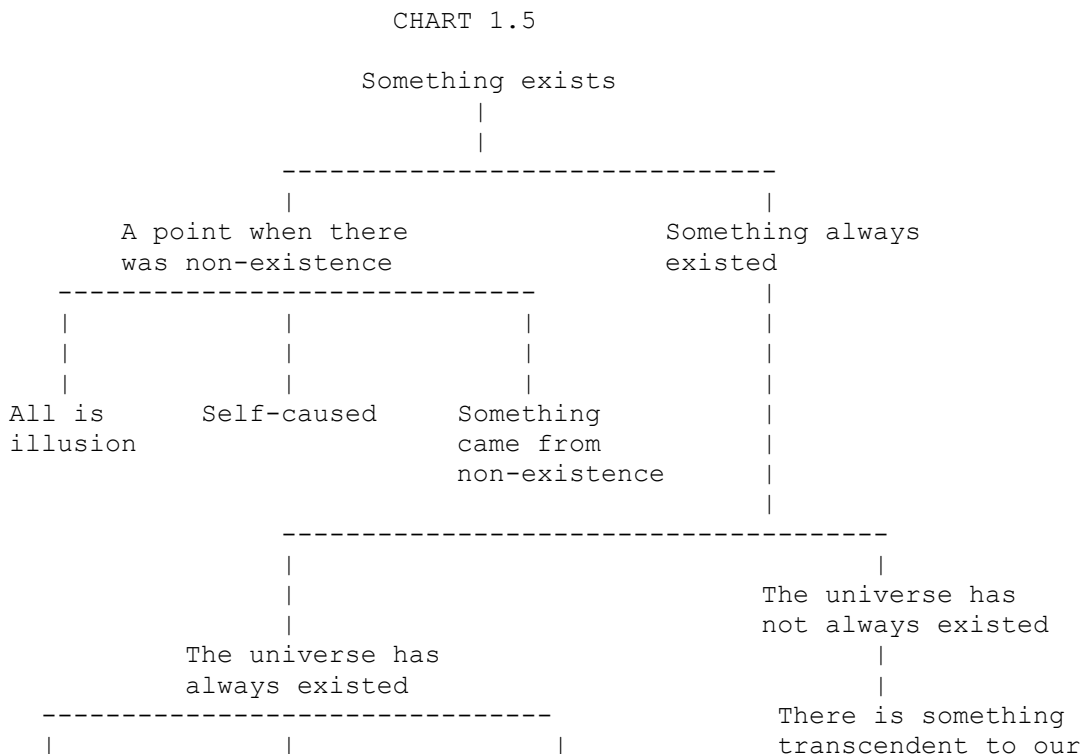
Since the three options available to the leg that maintains that the universe has always existed are shown to be false, the leg itself is shown false. If this leg is false, then the other leg of the disjunct must be true (via disjunctive syllogism). The leg we find to be true is that this universe has not always existed.

Although we have found that this universe did not always exist, we are still stuck with the fact that there is something in the category of "always existed." We also know that this 'something' is infinite, and uncaused. The philosophical term for an actual always existent that is other than our universe is 'transcendent.' This argument also shows that if the universe is not infinite, it had a beginning, it is finite. If it is finite, then it is derived. That means it had to come from something else. For, as we have already seen, something cannot come from nothing.

So, here is what we have learned through our discussion:

- 1: Since something exists, something has always existed.
- 2: The something that has always existed is uncaused, infinite in its existence.
- 3: This always existing something is transcendent to our universe (a universe that did not always exist, and is derived).

Our final version of chart 1 now looks like this:



The substance of the universe is infinite	an infinite regress of finite events	The universe existed timeless and static prior to 1st motion event	universe that always existed, is uncaused, and infinite.

Although minimally so, isn't the term 'God' consistent with what we mean when we talk about an infinite, uncaused, always existent, that is transcendent to our finite, derived (created) universe?

Is this argument a good argument?-

First, in examining the argument we see that it follows standard disjunctive syllogisms, nothing fancy, just straight forward deductions. The form is a valid form. Which means that the form of the argument will yield a true conclusion provided all the premises are true. Thus, we say, the conclusion follows necessarily.

Second, we must examine the truth of the premises. The argument unfolds by examining the possibilities that come from unpacking an existentially undeniable premise ("I exist"). By 'unpacking' I mean finding the necessary implications of the idea. For instance, if I exist, then it necessarily follows that something exists. If I know what I mean by 'I' and I know what I mean by 'something,' then I know for certain that if I exist, then something exists. I unpacked 'something exists' from the statement 'I exist.' Where there was more than one possibility unpacked, each was examined logically, and those that did not stand the examination were discarded, leaving those that were shown logically to be the case. In other words the premises used to demonstrate that God exists are true premises.

Therefore, since the argument is valid, and the premises are true, the conclusion yielded is a true conclusion. It is a conclusion that accurately describes reality.

Some objections -

Even though the argument is sound, there have been some attempts to get around the implication that God does exist. Allow me to share some attempts people have tried to use to get out of accepting the conclusion of the argument.

In the words of one gentleman whom I debated on this point:

"What Mr. Lenardos has not accounted for is that in addition to being uncaused, always existent, transcendent, etc., 'God' is almost universally understood to be a conscious, volitional being. From this it follows that no item picked out by the term 'God' could lack these properties and still be God." Here are a few examples of quotes from modern day Atheist writers that were presented to me in that recent discussion:

From Philosopher Paul Edwards:

"It has frequently been pointed out that even if this argument (the classical causal argument) were sound it would not establish the existence of God. It would not show that the first cause is all-powerful or all-good or that it is in any sense personal. Defenders of the causal argument usually concede this and insist that the argument is not in itself meant to prove the existence of God....Supplementary arguments are

required to show that the first cause must have attributes assigned to the deity." (From his article in The Rationalist Annual, 1959)

From William Rowe:

"(I)t might be objected that even if Aquinas' arguments do prove beyond doubt the existence of an unchanging changer, an uncaused cause, and a being that could not have failed to exist, the arguments fail to prove the existence of the theistic God." (Philosophy of Religion, Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1978)

Apparently these men, and there are others who follow them, feel it is necessary to demonstrate personality to demonstrate that what we have in a real always existing, uncaused, infinite that is transcendent to our finite, caused, derived universe can be termed as "God." The question is not whether God is a personal, active, volitional, conscious being, but rather, is it necessary to demonstrate that the always existent that does exist has these qualities in order to refer to it(?) as God?

I happen to believe that God is personal. I don't believe that the demonstration of personality is needed to show that the always existent is God. You will note that although my argument does not demonstrate that the always existent is personal, the argument in no way denies that the always existent is personal. At this point the question is open.

This objection seems to me as nothing more than a last ditch effort to keep from having to admit the obvious. The idea that one must either demonstrate personality, or one cannot refer to the always existent as "God" is absurd. One reason is that there are several religions and philosophies that assert an impersonal God. It is not true that volition, action, consciousness, i.e., personality is universally held. Here are just a couple of examples:

1) Hinduism. The ultimate being (God) in Hinduism is Brahman. Here is what John B. Noss, author of "Man's Religions", has to say concerning Brahman in the Hindu writings: "Some treatises, the earlier ones, regularly refer to Brahman as a neuter something, without motion or feeling, the impersonal matrix from which the universe has issued and to which it will in time return. This It, this One Thing, is the substratum of everything." Further reading in the Upanishads (sacred Hindu writings) reveal that there is a personal form of Brahman (called the formed) and an impersonal form (called the formless). However, it is the impersonal that is the ultimate and real: "There are, assuredly, two forms of Brahman: the formed and the formless. Now that which is formed is unreal; that which is formless is real" (from "Maitri Upanishad"). So we find that the "real" is the impersonal. On further reading we also find that this "formless" and real is also action less.

2) Plotinus. Plotinus had a huge neo-platonic following in the third century A.D. This next quotation is from Fredrick Copleston's "A History of Philosophy." It is about Plotinus' concept of God: "God is absolutely transcendent: He is the One, beyond all thought and all being... God is accordingly THE GOOD rather than "good." Moreover, we can legitimately ascribe to the One neither thought nor will nor activity."

3) Furthermore, we find that not even Theists historically believed that demonstrating personality was necessary to show that God exists. Such as Thomas Aquinas, Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz, and many others offered arguments for the existence of God that did not include personality as

a criteria for demonstrating that God existed. Assuredly, all of them offered other arguments at different points that God is a personal being, but they did not find it necessary to offer an argument for personality to demonstrate that God existed. So we find that from historical, philosophical, religious, and theistic stand points, it is not necessary to demonstrate that God is personal, to demonstrate that God does exist. Allow me to offer a list of just a few of the philosophers who argued for the existence of God without an inherent argument for personality in the argument presented:

Plato (see "Laws" and "Phaedrus")

Aristotle (see "Metaphysics")

Anselm (see "Prologion" and "Monologion")

Alfarabi (for easy references for this and the next see "A History of Medieval Philosophy" by Armand A. Maurer)

Avicenna

Thomas Aquinas (see "Summa Theologica")

John Duns Scotus (see "Philosophical Writings" trans. Allan B. Wolter)

Rene Descartes (see "Meditations" ch.5)

Leibniz (see "Monadology")

Spinoza (see "Ethics")

Richard Taylor (see "The Cosmological Argument")

Charles Hartshorne (see "The Ontological Argument")

N. Malcolm (see "The Ontological Argument")

Here we have a wide range of philosophers from many different viewpoints. Represented are Dualists, Pantheists, Panentheists, Muslims, and Christians.

The meaning of a term can be drawn from its common usage within a community. The community that deals with the type of argument I have given is the philosophical/religious community. The common usage within this community for the last 2500 years refers to an infinite, uncaused, always existent which is transcendent to our finite, derived, caused universe as God. The conjunction of the above examples demonstrate that the premise that says it is necessary to show personality before we may refer to the always existent as "God" is false.

Another debater attempted to argue in this manner:

"The article fails to carry out some crucial self-analysis on its conclusions. Doing so would reveal that the conclusions reached within the article disprove the entity the article claims to prove exists. The same reasoning by which the article 'disproves' an always existent universe also apply to the entity the article proposes."

What this debater is trying to say is that the same argument that is used to show

the universe is not always existent can be use to show the God is not always existent. This debater would be correct given any type of God that existed sequentially or was trapped within our dimension of time. In Christianity at least, God is not a sequential being and two other options have been offered concerning His existence. Christian theology has suggested that God is either timeless (outside of a dimension of time) or exists on multiple dimensions of time. God is not trapped in our one single dimension of created time. If either of these options is the case, then the above objection fails. So, our friend has not shown the existence of an always existent God to be impossible. He has shown that one type of god would be impossible and type of god is not one that most religious philosophi are interested in anyway.

Another debater reacted to the argument for the existence of God in this fashion:

"Although, the argument that our universe is not infinite looks good at first, we must remember that we don't know everything there is to know about infinity. We may even learn some new things in the future that would overturn what we know now. But, I think it may just be that our minds are not able to grasp enough about infinity to make the conclusion drawn here."

There are actually three objections here:

- 1) We shouldn't accept that the universe is not infinite, because we don't know enough about infinity.
- 2) We shouldn't accept that the universe is not infinite, because we may learn more about infinity later that would change our views.
- 3) We shouldn't accept that the universe is not infinite, because our minds cannot grasp enough about infinity make that conclusion.

Regarding the first two, they are forms of the logical fallacy Argumentum ad Ignorantiam. This is because the conclusion they seek to draw is not based on what we do know, but based on what we don't know. The reason they are fallacious is because they can be use for or against anything. For instance, we shouldn't accept the theory of relativity or the laws of thermodynamics because we just don't know enough about them and we may even learn some new things in the future that would overturn what we think we know now. Consider this one, we shouldn't reject the existence of unicorns or leprechauns because we just don't know enough about them and we may even learn some new things in the future that would overturn what we think we know now. One could also argue, we shouldn't accept that the universe is infinite because we just don't know enough about it and we may even learn some new things in the future that would overturn what we think we know now. This is just bad reasoning and is to be avoided at all cost.

In the third objection, I guess our critic is at least willing to accept that something is finite, our minds. Although this objection is similar to the first two, it differs slightly. The first two merely claim a lack of knowledge. This claims a lack of capability to know. But the problem that this critic has just run in to is not based on what we don't know about infinity, but what we do know. Let's take an example, If the only thing a person knew about a cat is that it is a mammal, that person could easily conclude that his goldfish was not a cat. He need not know everything about either the cat or the fish. He just needs to know one clearly identifying feature to draw this basic conclusion. The one thing he does know about the cat, clearly and distinctly, does not fit with what he knows about the fish. No matter how much more information he gathers about the cat and the fish, that disparity will never be closed. The fish will never be though a cat, because our person knows that a cat is a mammal and he knows

the fish is not a mammal.

That is the problem our objector has here. When ever we compare the clear and distinct things we do know about infinity to our universe, we never have a correspondence, in fact just the opposite is true, we see a disparity each and every time. No matter how much more capable our minds could become or how much more information we could get about infinity, this basic and primary disparity can never be expunged.

Last thoughts -

The argument I have given rest firmly and solidly on the laws of logic; in other words, rational thought. If someone would like to get around this argument there is only one way to do it: simply reject rational thought. You see, at the very beginning of the argument we had to make a choice: If we would deal with our topic rationally, or irrationally. If we chose the irrational, my argument is cut off at the root. I can't even make my first point, because all communication assumes rational thought. If, however, we chose to deal with the subject rationally, then the conclusion is clear: God exists!

You may find some who don't mind taking the irrational route when dealing with the existence of God. But, there can be no real reason to reject rational thought when it concerns God, and accept it in other areas. It is the same rational thought that tells a person to chew on the steak, and not the steak knife. So, if a person would be consistent in really giving up rational thought, it would be a toss up as to whether the person chews on the edge of the knife, or the steak presented on the plate. But, since we find few people who reject the existence of God, who are chewing on steak knives, we must assume that either they have not examined this argument, or they are selectively rejecting the argument despite its validity, and soundness. Each person must choose the way he will go. My only problem is with the person who rejects the argument and insists he is being rational. The person who rejects the argument, and rational thought, has a right to do so, but should at least be honest about it.

Suggested reading:

- * R. Descartes, Meditations, Chapters 1-3
- * N. Geisler, Philosophy of Religion, Chapters 8 & 9
- * R.C. Sproul, Reason to Believe, Chapter 7
- * William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith, Chapter 3
- * J.P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City, Chapter 1

