

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Professor Kreeft begins the video with his main point- that, “Belief in God is far more rational than atheism.” What are the main tenets of Professor Kreeft’s argument? Outline and explain. Do you find Professor Kreeft’s argument compelling? Why or why not?
- Early on in the video, Professor Kreeft shares Thomas Aquinas’ argument that, “There must be an Unmoved Mover to begin all the motion in the universe: a first domino to start the whole chain moving, since mere matter never moves itself.” Do you agree with Mr. Aquinas’ assertion? Why or why not? Do you think that this point supports the argument for God more so than any argument for atheism? Explain.
- Professor Kreeft then points out that, “A modern objection to this argument is that some movements things in quantum mechanics – radioactive decay, for example – have no discernible cause, but hang on a second. Just because scientists don’t see a cause, doesn’t mean there isn’t one.” Do you think that Professor Kreeft’s own observation could be used by those who oppose his view- in other words, ‘just because there is a cause, doesn’t necessarily mean that it is God- it could be some other force unknown to us?’ Why or why not?
- Professor Kreeft argues that, “If the universe had a beginning, then it didn’t have to exist. And things which don’t have to exist, must have a cause... Now add to this premise, a very logical second premise – the principal of causality that nothing begins without an adequate cause. And you get the conclusion that since there was a Big Bang, there must be a Big Banger. But is this Big Banger God?” How would you answer Professor Kreeft’s question? Do you agree with each of his premises? If yes, why? If not, what is your counter point?
- At the end of the video Professor Kreeft states, “An absolute beginning is what most people mean by God... The conclusion that God exists doesn’t require faith. Atheism requires faith. It takes faith to believe in everything coming from nothing. It takes only reason to believe in everything coming from God.” Why do you think that atheists don’t believe in a higher power? Considering that if God exists, then God is supernatural, i.e. ‘beyond nature,’ why do you think that so many atheists demand exclusively natural, empirical evidence to prove the existence of God rather than looking for rational or supernatural evidence of a supernatural being?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Thomas Aquinas

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Aquinas Proves Atheists Are Closer to God Than They Think,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What topic did Dr. Davies address in his article published in The Times? How is examining the way in which God exists salient to the discussion of whether God exists or not?
- What fundamental problem in theological debate did Dr. Davies illustrate? Why do you think that so many people automatically assume that the terms they use in such debate are universally and equivocally understood?
- How did Aquinas describe God as existing? Do you think that including the topic of what kind of God exists is just as important as discussing whether God exists at all? Why or why not?



QUIZ

GOD VS. ATHEISM: WHICH IS MORE RATIONAL?

1. **Belief in God is:**
 - a. Crazy.
 - b. Irrational.
 - c. Far more rational than atheism.
 - d. Confusing and scary.

2. **According to Thomas Aquinas, there must be an Unmoved Mover:**
 - a. To begin the motion of the universe.
 - b. To make it rain.
 - c. Because he proved it.
 - d. To fix the world's problems.

3. **Radioactive decay has a scientific cause.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. **The entire universe came into existence:**
 - a. 17 billion years ago.
 - b. 14 billion years ago.
 - c. 11 billion years ago.
 - d. 13.7 billion years ago.

5. **Since there was a Big Bang:**
 - a. There must have been a lot of noise.
 - b. There must have been a Big Banger.
 - c. There must have been a big bang for other universes.
 - d. There must have been matter to create the Big Bang.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/aquinas-proves-atheists-are-closer-to-god-than-they-think>

[Catholic Answers Magazine](#)

Aquinas Proves Atheists Are Closer to God Than They Think

By: [Mark Brumley](#)

Some time ago, when the hubbub of the New Atheists commenced, philosopher of religion Brian Davies wrote a column that was subtitled, presumably by *The Times* where it appeared, "Aquinas proves atheists are closer to God than they think." Davies' piece was not an exercise in woolly thinking, calculated to cast the net of inclusivity as wide as possible by purporting to dissolve the hard distinction between affirming God's existence and denying it. His point was to ask what kind of God our atheist friends deny the existence of and to ask whether that is the God whose existence someone such as St. Thomas Aquinas affirms.

We might ask the same question. Atheists sometimes think of God as a being who exists alongside other beings in the universe. In this view, God may be thought of as the biggest and the best being in the universe, but he is still a being like the rest of us, an interesting feature of all that happens to be.

A Being outside All Others

If that is what you mean by God, argues Davies, then Thomas would agree that such a God does not exist. God, Davies quotes Thomas as saying, "is to be thought of as existing outside the realm of existents, as a cause from which pours forth everything that exists in all its variant forms." In other words, there is no such being as the God who is thought to exist as just one more thing along side a can of beans or the planet Jupiter.

A complicating factor is the word *exists*. We think we understand perfectly what that word means because everything we see around us can be described by using that word. The magazine in which you are reading this article *exists*, as does the roof over your head and the sky above. Likewise, you *exist*. It seems such a straightforward thing to say. And of course in some ways it is, when we're talking about everyday things. Yet things become complicated—for us limited beings—when we take that little word *exists* and apply it to God.

It may seem obvious to say that a Christian or even a generic theist is someone who says, "God exists," and an atheist is someone who says, "God does not exist." However, the traditional Christian (even the mere theist) wants to say more things about God, things that affect the use of the word *exist* as applied to God. Here is where Thomas comes in. When he says, "God exists," he doesn't mean by *exist* exactly the same thing that he means when he says, "Rome exists" or "Jupiter exists" or even, "I exist."

There are, says Thomas, things that *receive* their existence, that are *dependent* for their existence. I exist because my parents existed; I received my existence from them. That mountain exists because the earth exists and certain geological principles exist that go into the formation of mountains. And so on.

Not everything, argues Thomas, can be a *receiver* of existence. Something (or Someone) must exist in its (his) own right, and not because of something else. Otherwise, there would be no existence to be passed on by the all various receivers of existence we encounter in the world around us. That something which (or Someone who) exists in its (his) own right and not as dependent on another is God. He, says Thomas, simply is, with the fullness of all that the word "is" can contain. This is why God is called "the Supreme Being." Lesser beings are dependent for their existence on others. Not so God.

I have just summarized one of Thomas's arguments for God's existence. Whatever you make of it, my point here is to focus on the *kind* of existence that Thomas says God has, not on Thomas's argument for God's existence. God's kind of existence is uncaused and independent. That is why Thomas can say that God "is to be thought of as existing outside the realm of existents" (*Commentary on Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias*, 1.14). That does not mean it is right to say, "There is no God." If we use the word *existent* to refer to beings that get their existence or are dependent for it on another or others, then it is right to say that God is "outside the realm of existents." Indeed, God, in this view, would be the *cause of existence*, the reason there is something rather than nothing. Yes, there is a perfectly good sense in which we must speak of God as "existing," but, as Thomas would quickly add, God's existence is radically different from the existence of everything else.

Only God Truly Exists

Davies says we can look at the same truth from a different angle. If we want to use the word *exists* for God's kind of existence, then everything that is *not* God can be said to exist only in a qualified way. The atheist, in such a scenario, is as wrong as he can be. For he says that God does not exist, but if we use the word *exist* in the fullest possible sense of the word, then *only* God exists. Other beings can be said to have existence—they get their existence from something else. Only God *fully exists*, only God *is* existence; that is, only God exists by nature. Only God is not dependent on anything or anyone else for his existence. He simply *is*.

So if we want to talk about God using the word *exists* in the way we use it of everything else, the daily objects of our experience, then we can say, "God does not exist." That is, he does not exist as *dependent*, as *receiving* his existence from somewhere else, the way everything else does. If we want to take God's way of existing—uncaused, independent, not received—as *full existence*, then we must say that nothing but God *exists*, because everything else is caused, has existence as dependent, and received, etc.

The atheist would be on to something when he says, "God does not exist" if he meant by "exist" that God is a being or object like all the beings and objects of our immediate experience in the universe. *That* God does not exist. But the atheist is utterly off the mark when he means that God does not exist in any way whatsoever. It is the atheist's existence (and everybody else's) that comes in to question if we use the word *exist* in its divine, deepest sense.

Mark Brumley is president of Ignatius Press, one of the nation's largest Catholic publishers and distributors of videos and music. A former staff apologist with Catholic Answers, he is author of *How Not to Share our Faith*, co-author of *A Study Guide for Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week...*