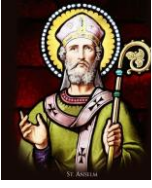
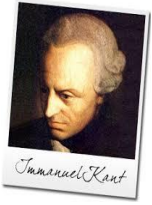


Paper 1: June 4th 2019 Morning: Arguments Based On Reason: Ontological



The Ontological Argument tries to prove God exists based on logically thinking who God is. Ontological means the study of being. It uses reasoning that comes before and is independent of experience (a priori). It uses theoretical, analytical and logical deduction to prove God's existence. **It is deductive, aiming to prove, without question, God's existence. It works from definitions outwards. If you understand the definition of God, you understand God exists.** God exists is an analytic statement (as opposed to a synthetic statement based on experience) where the meaning of a word is contained in the word (eg bachelors are unmarried males). **Just as a square has four sides so God has existence. A non-existent God is a contradiction.**



Saint Anselm: He lived as a monk in France and then became Archbishop of Canterbury. The book, Proslogion, where we find the ontological argument in is a prayer addressed to God. He defined theology as "faith seeking understanding." "I believe so I can understand" he said. **Understanding God is a consequence of belief. In chapters 2 and 3 we find:**

1. Anselm's First Formulation : Anselm quotes Psalms 14 and 56: "The fool in his heart says there is no God." By fool, the writer means an atheist. For Anselm, the fool is a fool because he has to understand God to say God does not exist but, despite this understanding, the fool rejects God. The fool (atheist) has a common understand God in the minds. Anselm gives the example of the painter. The painter imagines their painting so it exists in her or his mind. Once the painting is painted it exists in the understanding and reality. Anselm separates two types of existence – existence in the mind and existence in reality. Existence of a million pounds in reality is greater than if just exists in the mind. Anselm defines God as that which nothing greater can be thought of – God is the greatest possible being. "A being greater than which none can be conceived." The atheist and theist understand this. God, therefore, exists in everyone's mind. God is defined as the greatest possible being and, because it is greater to exist in reality than just in the mind (the painting that exists in reality is fully understood once completed), God must exist in both mind and reality. God cannot just exist in the mind alone because there would be a greater being that would exist in the mind and reality and that would itself be God, the greatest possible being, otherwise there would be a contradiction. "So, that which being which nothing greater can be thought about must exist in understanding and fact. If God did not exist God would not be the greatest thing we can conceive."

2. Anselm's Second Formulation / Argument: Necessary Existence

Anselm states there are beings that one can imagine not existing. These are contingent beings. There are also beings that cannot not exist or necessary beings. God cannot be a contingent being as God would not be the greatest possible being. God, therefore, must be a necessary being and, if God is a necessary being, God cannot not exist which means God exists. God cannot not be. Everything is contingent apart from God. God exists more truly than other beings. To a rational mind, God exists to the highest degree of all. The fool is a fool. In Anselm's day scientists thought necessary beings included all permanent things -earth, sun and stars. They were created by God as necessary beings that show no sign of decay. God greater.

Gaunilo was a monk who lived at the time on Anselm. He wrote "On Behalf Of The Fool."

Anselm believed that understanding the definition of God did not necessarily mean God existed. He used Anselm's logic in a different context. **He asked us to imagine the greatest conceivable but lost island, somewhere in the ocean. It has all "riches and delicacies" more so than any other island.** *If you were told about the island you would be able to imagine it. It would exist in your mind.* Gaunilo stated that, according to Anselm's logic, this island would have to exist **because it must be so as it is more excellent to exist in reality than just in the mind.** Gaunilo stated that **Anselm's internal logic was false.** **You would not feel that anyone had proven anything to you because nobody had shown you its existence was there in the first place.**



Other points made by Gaunilo.

- 1. Perfectly usual to have many unreal objects in our minds.**
- 2. We may believe something unreal someone tells us but this does not make it real.**
- 3. Anselm's painter analogy - there is a difference between**
- 4. initial idea and final product.**
- 5. We do not necessarily have a common understanding of God - different for different people.**
- 6. We never fully understand something from description alone – the same words conjure different pictures.**
- 7. Cannot define something into existence.**
- 8. He said we are aware of our existence but can think of our non-existence and this is the same with God. Not necessary.**



Anselm's Third Argument: Anselm replied to Gaunilo.

He reaffirmed his initial definition of God as being the only being that cannot not exist. The moment that you decide that there could be a being that which nothing greater can be thought, you have placed it in your mind and that is what God is. It becomes a contradiction to say that there is a greatest possible being that might not exist. God is a special case. Gaunilo has misplaced his logic. *Anselm is not talking about any other object but about God, a necessary being who is the greatest possible being whereas an island is contingent. Islands depend on the sea and earth. Islands do not have to exist and are not necessary. Nothing in the universe exists independently of anything else. A table needs materials. So are islands. Only God is supremely necessary. God is not contingent. God is not dependent on anything else.*

John Hick stated that a perfect island does not make sense anyway. How many palm trees or grains of sand would it have? Anselm defends his painter analogy by saying it shows the coherence of his logic – he is not saying the painter or painting are God. We say the best possible version of those matters we attribute to God. When we are thinking about good, we attribute perfect goodness to God. The being than which is greater is inconceivable must be whatever should be attributed to the divine essence. In the 20th century, Norman Malcom says God's existence is either necessary or contradictory (impossible). Malcom believes it necessary because God is different kind of Being.

Descartes said we are born with innate ideas including God. God is by definition perfect to be God. God must contain all perfections. Including existence. If God did not exist, God would not be perfect. Existence is a defining predicate (part of a sentence that describes the quality of an object) of God just as triangles have three angles and sides, and a mountain has a valley. Defining predicates are what something has to have to be itself. God that did not exist would not be God.

To understand Kant's two criticisms, you need to know that sentences are made up of subjects (what the sentence is about) and predicates (a description of it).

Objection 1: Kant supposes that it is true that existence is part of what it means for God to be perfect. But Kant says comes from a "judgement" and not from the absolute necessity of something. Kant uses the example of a triangle. *Having three angles is what it means for a triangle to be a triangle. But this triangle only has three angles if the triangle exists in the first place. There is no contradiction in rejecting a concept together with its defining predicates. We do not contradict the concept of a mermaid or triangle if we reject its existence.* There is no contradiction either in saying God does not exist. Ontological arguments are bad logic because they make us suppose that if we justify God's perfection including existence we are assuming God exists. *It is circular logic. We cannot make up an object and define it in any number of ways but this does not make the object exist in reality, even though the definition is true.* You can accept the predicate of the sentence all you want but if the subject does not exist in the first place there is no possible contradiction. A predicate is only a predicate because it has a subject but if subject rejected...

Objection 2: Kant does not believe existence is a characteristic / proper or determining predicate. The mermaid or 100 German thalers do not change because they exist. Existence adds nothing extra. It actualises but this is a different aspect /category. So, existence is not a description that adds something to the understanding of the subject. Saying this is a revision guide tells me that book is a revision guide but to say the book exists tells me nothing about the book. A unicorn has a single horn tells me what a unicorn is but a unicorn exists tells me nothing new about unicorns. Kant used the example of his German currency – a 100 real thalers is still the same currency as a 100 possible thalers. The existence of the thalers is not something defined by logic but by experience. A priori arguments do not work. Existence is not a determining predicate and does not give information like other predicates.

Criticisms: 1. Thomas Aquinas said God's nature is unknown to us .We can only know God indirectly through the effects of the world. Not everyone agrees that God is anyway and many doubt God. God is not self- evident. 2. Bertrand Russell: The King of France is bald is not necessarily true because we state it, We need evidence. 3. John Cottingham: Maybe this argument needs to be understood as helping people with already existing faith. That was Anselm's context of writing. Perfection of God for those with faith. 4. Can we define God the same as we can define a square? 5. People differ on what a greatest possible being would be. 6. Does everyone really have a common understanding of God in the mind? 7. Is the greatest possible being logical? 8. Is the ontological argument needed if God can be experienced? 9. Does not say much specifically about God. 10. Cannot prove God with logic.