

Before exploring the title of this essay we must understand the ontological argument. According to philosophers such as Anselm, it can be proven that God's existence is necessary; it is, they argue, a tautology such as the statement 'all bachelors are unmarried men' an a priori analytic truth, falsifying such argument means self contradiction. The ontological argument reasons through 3 premises, and accepting that these to be true reach the conclusion that god must exist. The first premise states that: God is that which nothing greater can be conceived. The second premise states: that which nothing greater can be conceived possesses all perfections. The third premise states finally that: existence is perfection. Finally the conclusion reached is that if these premises correspond to reality is: God must exist.

The first premise in the ontological argument clearly states that god is that which no greater can be conceived. This means that he cannot exist only in our understanding as in order to be 'that which no greater can be conceived' god must fulfil existence in all forms of being. Because of the every nature of this God, he could not only exist in our understanding alone, as we could conceive something greater, such as a being that existed both in our understanding AND reality. And in that case, this being would be god, as by definition god is the greatest conceivable being. The ontological argument is an argument similar to that of a triangle. In order for a triangle to be a triangle, it must have 3 sides, it is in its nature, and a triangle needs 3 sides in order to exist as a triangle. It is necessarily true, it a contingent argument.

If we accept the three premises to be true then the conclusion is inevitable. However philosophers such as Kant, Aquinas and Guaniolo found much criticism in this argument. This last philosopher, Guaniolo, was contemporary to Anselm himself and criticised the argument in that it according to the grounds of the ontological argument, it was possible to prove the existence of any perfect being, and he took the example of a perfect island to demonstrate this. He constructed an ontological argument for the existence of a perfect island; by the same token, he argued that in order for the perfect island to be perfect, much like god, it must exist. If it did not exist it would not be perfect. This argument can then be applied to any perfect thing such as the perfect basketball player or the perfect wife. However, in all these arguments, these perfect beings must exist in order to be perfect, but we know that the perfect wife or island do not exist and neither does the perfect basketball player. All of these arguments must then be illogical and so must the existence of god.

Another such argument came from Kant. He argued that the existence of god was self-evident. He argues that in the 1st principle itself we are assuming that there is a god to begin with, we are not gaining any knowledge from the argument. And is therefore of no use to us. He also argued that existence couldn't be a predicate in the way that other qualities are predicates because all existential judgments are synthetic, not analytic. He argued that god's existence was not the same as the three-sided triangle argument. He argues it is synthetic, i.e. that the predicate is

not contained within the subject, for example the statement triangles are funny, no where in the definition of a triangle does it state that they are funny.

A philosopher by the name of desecrates however reviewed Anselm's ontological argument, a much simpler version where he does not concentrate on a definition for god but in its idea. It is an apriori argument.

Although the arguments debate that a God that does not exist, though, cannot be that than which no greater can be conceived, for he could be conceived to exist which would be greater. God, therefore, cannot be non-existent; he must exist. These ontological arguments it can be said, still face the critical problem that in both cases the first premise indicates the existence of a god. It is very difficult for us as humans to understand the world without god, as it is in our nature to want to be happy and to wish for a greater being. However we must be careful in not assuming god's existence before logically reaching this answer. I do not believe that the Ontological argument proves the existence of god, as its starting point is an assumption. The argument does not prove anything in itself and is definitely not enough proof to justify the existence of god.

Do you think the
Ontological argument
proves the existence
of god?



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