

(a) Explain Anselm's versions of the Ontological argument (33)

The Ontological argument was invented by Anselm, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109. Anselm set out to produce an absolutely certain argument for the existence of God, using reason. He first produced the Ontological argument in Proslogion 2, but was then forced to adjust it and produce a new argument in Proslogion 3.

The Ontological argument is an a priori, deductive, analytical argument. The argument attempts to work logically to prove God's existence using reason and agreed definitions.

Firstly, Anselm produced the Ontological argument in Proslogion 2. This begins with Anselm's basic premise that everyone has a concept of God. He identifies that *'the fool hath said in his heart there is no God'*. The next premise is that God must be that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Therefore he must have the perfection of existence. Anselm then poses the question: 'What is greater? Existence in the mind or existence in the mind and reality. Obviously existence in both is greater and therefore God must exist in reality as well as the mind.

However, Gaunilo of Marmoutiers made an objection to this. He gave the basic premise that he was able to think of a most real and perfect island. He then agreed that it was greater to exist in the mind and in reality than to exist in reality alone. He then came to the conclusion that this lost but perfect island must exist in reality as well as in the mind. However, he then said that this conclusion was absurd and therefore Anselm's argument is absurd. There is no need for this perfect island to exist in reality.

Gaunilo's objection forced Anselm to adjust his argument. Anselm agreed that this island need not have existed, but he said that it need not have existed because it was contingent. This means that a perfect island has to be created and therefore caused by something else. However, God is not contingent and therefore he has not been caused. Therefore, God's existence is indeed necessary.

(b) 'Logic cannot prove the existence of God'. Discuss (17)

There are different methods one can use to produce an argument for God's existence. Firstly, there is an a posteriori approach, which relies heavily on evidence and therefore needs to have been experienced. This method is testable, flexible and capable of differing conclusions.

Secondly, there is an a priori approach which relies heavily on fixed definitions. This avoids misunderstandings and is logically necessary whilst there are no alternative conclusions. However, this argument relies on everyone agreeing on certain definitions of things.

There have been two modern attempts to address the problem of God's existence logically.

Firstly, Norman Malcolm agrees with Anselm's Proslogion 3 that God's existence is necessary. He then says that if God does that than which nothing greater can be conceived and he has not always existed, he cannot come into existence. This is because he would have been caused and would therefore be a limited being. So it would be impossible for him to come into existence. So if he does exist, his existence

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is necessary as it could not have been caused. This is an anti- real argument as it only has value within the belief system.

Secondly, Alvin Platinga's argument includes a notion of possible worlds, with infinite possibilities. A possible world could have a being of maximal greatness, which must therefore exist in all possible worlds. Maximal greatness must entail maximal excellence, meaning there is a world which exists a being of maximally great and maximally great being. If it exists in a possible world, it must exist in our world too.

However there are weaknesses with deductive reasoning. For example, conclusions are only apparently logically necessary. This means that some premises are not agreed upon and can therefore be destroyed. Another weakness with this kind of argument is that it starts with the assumption of there being a God.

Although there are also attractions to this type of approach such as helping the faith of theists and contributing to a philosophical debate. However, it is very hard to say that deductive reasoning can prove God's existence logically. It could be said that deductive reasoning may provide us with reasons why God could exist but it cannot provide a complete proof that will convince everybody of God's existence. It could, in fact, be argued that God's existence can never be proved through human argument.