

How far does the Ontological argument provide the existence of God?

‘Ontological’ means ‘nature of being. It is a branch of metaphysics and set of entities presupposed by a theory. It states that if we understand the meaning of the word God we will realise that God exists, it is in the very nature of God that he should exist. And God wouldn’t be God if he didn’t exist. The ontological argument answers the question ‘What is the concept of God?’ It is an ‘a priori’ argument, not an argument based on the interpretation of evidence but an argument before experience. This is dissimilar to an ‘a posteriori’ argument which only gives merely probability unlike an ‘a priori’ argument, which can be sound and offer reliable proof. It’s an argument based on Logic. Logical truths are true by definition. We know they are true independently of experience e.g. We do not need to check that all circles are round because a circle cannot be anything else but round, it is true by definition. In order to determine the soundness of the argument, we need to consider, not the probability of any evidence but the logical coherence of the argument. To analyse the logical coherence we must look to whether you can define something into existence and also ‘Is existence a predicate?’

There are two main principal contributors to the ‘classical argument’ St Anselm of Canterbury and Rene Descartes. Anselm’s defined God as ‘a *liquid quo nihil maior cogitari possit*’, which means ‘that than nothing greater can be conceived’. Then he says it is better to exist in reality than in the mind alone. Therefore God exists. He also says that even the atheist must have a definition of God, if only to dismiss His existence.