

**“The Ontological Argument will never be of any use trying to prove God’s existence”**

If the Ontological Argument seeks to prove that God exists as the creator and sustainer of the universe, whether as timeless substance or an everlasting Spirit, then it fails for the reasons giving by Aquinas, Kant and Hume. If the Ontological Argument seeks to prove that, in the anti-realist revisionary view of God, God necessarily exists for the believer once the believer has come to understand what the word “God” means, then the argument had considerable force. Once the believer understand what it means to talk of God, then God exists for him or her. God is a reality within the form of religious believers.

In addition, some philosophers may agree with the above statement that the Ontological Argument is of no use when trying to prove God’s existence. Hume says that however much our concept of an object may contain, we must go outside it to determine whether or not it exists. We cannot define something into existence, even if it has all the perfections we can imagine. Also, Gaunilo used the idea of a perfect island to disprove St. Anselm’s claim that we can define something into existence. Gaunilo said that if we imagined the greatest possible island, then it must exist. And as we know this is not possible, and nor does it make sense. However Anselm’s reply to this is that it only applies to God as only God has perfections. It can be argued that things subject to space and time cannot be perfect; hence Gaunilo’s Perfect Island cannot exist. Aquinas, another key scholar, also rejects Anselm’s argument as he claims that many people have different definition and understandings of what God is. Moreover, Aquinas rejects precisely the point that Descartes wants to affirm. Descartes says we can know God’s essence and therefore we can say that God must exist. Aquinas does not think that God’s essence is knowable to us. Therefore his argument cannot work. Plantinga, who was another scholar, maintains that all Norman Malcolm has shown is that greatest possible being exists in some possible world, but not necessarily in the real world. To overcome this difficulty, Plantinga differentiates between “maximal excellence” (which entails omnipotence, omniscience and moral perfection) and “maximal greatness” which entails the property “has maximal excellence in every possible world”). Plantinga wants to maintain that if God has maximal greatness then God must exist in every possible world. However, Plantinga himself points out the weakness in his own position – one could have another term, “no-maximality” which is the property in a world of having no maximally great being. Is this is exemplified in one possible world; it could be exemplified in every possible world. This is a key problem when trying to state that one can arrive at the existence of God by analysing God’s nature. These philosophers prove that the Ontological Argument will never be of any use when trying to prove God’s existence.

However, other key philosophers may disagree with the statement, such as Descartes. He believes the existence is a predicate of God, and that without existence God could not hold the same definition. However Kant disagreed with this idea that existence would not change or add any extra information about that particular object. Existence cannot be said to be a quality. In response Descartes would disagree, and explain that it is in the definition of God, and hence in His essence that He exists. Kant

also believed that an object that exists in the mind is not made any greater by saying that it exists in reality. This is a complete contradiction to the reasoning that St. Anselm uses to come to the conclusion that God exists. Anselm believes that God is a being then which not other greater being can be conceived. And so if this great being exists only in our mind, it is not as great as if it actually existed in reality. Hence, as God is the greatest being, in order to be the greatest, he must exist in reality as well as in the mind. And this is what Anselm uses to prove God's existence. These arguments conclude that the Ontological Argument is useful to try and prove God's existence.