

The Ontological Modal Collapse as a Collapse of the Square of Opposition

Christoph Benz Müller and Bruno Woltzenlogel Paleo

Abstract. The *modal collapse* that afflicts Gödel’s modal ontological argument for God’s existence is discussed from the perspective of the modal square of opposition.

Mathematics Subject Classification (2000). Prim. 03A02; Sec. 68T02 .

Keywords. Modal Logics, Higher-Order Logics, Ontological Argument, Interactive and Automated Theorem Proving.

Change?: 03B15,
03B45, 03B35,
68T15

1. Introduction

Attempts to prove the existence (or non-existence) of God by means of abstract, ontological arguments are an old tradition in western philosophy, with contributions by several prominent philosophers, including St. Anselm of Canterbury, Descartes and Leibniz. Kurt Gödel and Dana Scott studied and further improved this argument, bringing it to a mathematically more precise form, as a chain of axioms, lemmas and theorems in a second-order modal logic [19, 26], shown in Fig. 1.

Gödel defines God as a being who possesses all *positive* properties and states a few reasonable (but debatable) axioms that such properties should satisfy. The overall idea of Gödel’s proof is in the tradition of Anselm’s argument, who defined God as some entity of which nothing greater can be conceived. Anselm argued that existence in the actual world would make such an assumed being even greater (more perfect); hence, by definition, God must exist. However, for Anselm existence was treated as a predicate and the possibility of God’s existence was assumed as granted. These issues were criticized by Kant and Leibniz, respectively, and they were addressed in the work of Gödel.

Nevertheless, Gödel’s work still leaves room for criticism. In particular, his axioms are so strong that they entail a *modal collapse* [27, 28]: everything that is the case is so necessarily. There has been an impressive body of recent and ongoing

A1 Either a property or its negation is positive, but not both:

$$\forall\varphi[P(\neg\varphi) \leftrightarrow \neg P(\varphi)]$$

A2 A property necessarily implied by a positive property is positive:

$$\forall\varphi\forall\psi[(P(\varphi) \wedge \Box\forall x[\varphi(x) \rightarrow \psi(x)]) \rightarrow P(\psi)]$$

T1 Positive properties are possibly exemplified:

$$\forall\varphi[P(\varphi) \rightarrow \Diamond\exists x\varphi(x)]$$

D1 A *God-like* being possesses all positive properties:

$$G(x) \equiv \forall\varphi[P(\varphi) \rightarrow \varphi(x)]$$

A3 The property of being God-like is positive:

$$P(G)$$

C Possibly, a God-like being exists:

$$\Diamond\exists xG(x)$$

A4 Positive properties are necessarily positive:

$$\forall\varphi[P(\varphi) \rightarrow \Box P(\varphi)]$$

D2 An *essence* of an individual is a property possessed by it and necessarily implying any of its properties:

$$\varphi \text{ ess } x \equiv \varphi(x) \wedge \forall\psi(\psi(x) \rightarrow \Box\forall y(\varphi(y) \rightarrow \psi(y)))$$

T2 Being God-like is an essence of any God-like being:

$$\forall x[G(x) \rightarrow G \text{ ess } x]$$

D3 *Necessary existence* of an individual is the necessary exemplification of all its essences:

$$NE(x) \equiv \forall\varphi[\varphi \text{ ess } x \rightarrow \Box\exists y\varphi(y)]$$

A5 Necessary existence is a positive property:

$$P(NE)$$

L1 If a god-like being exists, then necessarily a god-like being exists:

$$\exists xG(x) \rightarrow \Box\exists yG(y)$$

L2 If possibly a god-like being exists, then necessarily a god-like being exists:

$$\Diamond\exists xG(x) \rightarrow \Box\exists yG(y)$$

T3 Necessarily, a God-like being exists:

$$\Box\exists xG(x)$$

FIGURE 1. Scott's version of Gödel's ontological argument [26].

work (cf. [28, 17, 2, 1, 12, 18, 20, 21, 16] and the references therein) proposing solutions for the modal collapse. The goal of this contribution is to discuss the modal collapse from the point of view of the modal square of opposition.

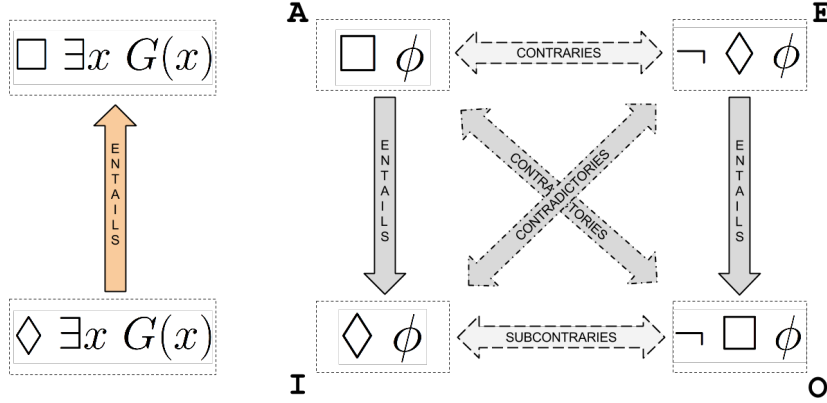


FIGURE 2. Modal Square of Opposition.

2. A Collapse of the Modal Square

A crucial step of most ontological arguments is the claim that if God's existence is possible, then it is necessary. This is Lemma **L2** in Gödel's proof. In the modal square of opposition (Fig. 2), this is an unusual situation in which the **I** corner must imply and entail the **A** corner, in the particular case when ϕ is $\exists x G(x)$. Gödel's proof shows that his axioms are indeed strong enough to invert the direction of entailment for this choice of ϕ . This observation, however, immediately leads to the question whether the axioms are eventually even strong enough to enable the inverted entailment for any arbitrary sentence ϕ . That is essentially the question asked by Sobel [27], and his proof of the modal collapse (**MC**, cf. Fig. 3) provides an affirmative answer. It is possible to show that this form of the modal collapse entails (in modal logic **K**) a collapse of the modal square (**MCs**), causing the subcontraries to entail (and even imply) their respective contraries. Normally, as shown in Fig. 2, in the modal square of opposition only the other direction of entailment holds: the contraries entail their subcontraries, assuming the *modal existential import* **ExImp** [15].

Moreover, in any modal logic where the axiom **T** holds (i.e. where the accessibility relation is reflexive), even a total collapse of the modalities (**MCt**) is entailed by **MC**. Interestingly, under this stronger form of modal collapse, the contraries entail their subcontraries even without the existential import.

Although Gödel's axioms lead to modal collapse, there are several variants (e.g. [2, 1, 12]) that are known to be immune to it. This means there must be at least one proposition ϕ such that the implication $\phi \rightarrow \Box\phi$ (from now on abbreviated as *collapse*(ϕ)) is not valid under the axioms and definitions used by the variant. But if the variant is sufficiently similar to Gödel's argument, also deriving Lemmas **L1** and **L2**, then *collapse*($\exists x G(x)$) must be valid. Therefore, one may

MC	Everything that is the case is so necessarily: $\forall\phi[\phi \rightarrow \Box\phi]$
MCs	Everything that is possible is necessary: $\forall\phi[\Diamond\phi \rightarrow \Box\phi]$
T	Everything that is necessary is the case: $\forall\phi[\Box\phi \rightarrow \phi]$
ExImp	(Modal Existential Import): $\Diamond\top$
AI	Everything that is necessary is possible: $\forall\phi[\Box\phi \rightarrow \Diamond\phi]$
MCt	Modalities collapse completely: $\forall\phi[(\phi \leftrightarrow \Box\phi) \wedge (\Diamond\phi \leftrightarrow \Box\phi)]$

FIGURE 3. Modal Collapse

A:D1	A <i>God-like</i> being necessarily possesses those and only those properties that are positive: $G_A(x) \equiv \forall\varphi[P(\varphi) \leftrightarrow \Box\varphi(x)]$
A:MC	The modal collapse happens for any positive properties applied to any god-like being: $\forall\varphi\forall x[(P(\varphi) \wedge G_A(x)) \rightarrow \text{collapse}(\varphi(x))]$
A:MC1	The modal collapse does <i>not</i> happen for positive properties applied to arbitrary individuals (<i>counter-satisfiable</i>): $\forall\varphi\forall x[P(\varphi) \rightarrow \text{collapse}(\varphi(x))]$
A:MC2	The modal collapse does <i>not</i> happen for an arbitrary properties applied to a god-like being (<i>counter-satisfiable</i>): $\forall\varphi\forall x[G_A(x) \rightarrow \text{collapse}(\varphi(x))]$

FIGURE 4. Restricted Collapse for Anderson's Emendation [2]

wonder how strong is their immunity to the modal collapse: is there any other proposition ϕ for which $\text{collapse}(\phi)$ is also valid?

For Anderson's emendation [2], for example, a form of the modal collapse (**A:MC**), restricted to positive properties applied to god-like beings, can be derived. The proof, under the modal logic **K**, depends only on Anderson's alternative definition of god-like being (**A:D1**). This class of propositions for which the collapse occurs is tight: weaker restrictions (**A:MC1** and **A:MC2**), which could lead to larger classes, are counter-satisfiable. These results hold under both constant and varying domain quantification, with possibilist and actualist quantifiers.

Independently of the variant of the ontological argument under consideration, the following can be said about classes of collapsing propositions:

1. Valid propositions are collapsing: if ϕ is valid, then $\text{collapse}(\phi)$ is valid.
2. The class of collapsing propositions is closed under logical equivalence: if $\text{collapse}(\phi)$ is valid and $\phi \leftrightarrow \phi'$ is valid, then $\text{collapse}(\phi')$ is valid.

3. The class of collapsing propositions is not generally closed under equi-validity: even if $\text{collapse}(\phi)$ is valid and ϕ and ϕ' are equi-valid, $\text{collapse}(\phi')$ may not be valid.
4. The class of collapsing propositions is not generally closed under implication: even if $\text{collapse}(\phi)$ is valid and $\phi \rightarrow \phi'$ is valid, $\text{collapse}(\phi')$ may not be valid.

3. Final Remarks

All results announced in this note have been obtained experimentally using interactive and automated theorem provers and model finders [10, 14, 22, 11, 13]. The source codes of the experiments, as well as the resulting proofs and counter-models, are available in github.com/FormalTheology/GoedelGod/ in the files `ModalCollapse.thy` and `ModalSquareOfOpposition.thy` inside the folder `Formalizations/Isabelle/Meta` as well as in files inside the folder `Formalizations/Isabelle/Anderson`.

The technique enabling these experiments is the embedding of quantified modal logics into higher-order logics [9, 8, 3], for which automated theorem provers exist. This technique has already been successfully employed in the verification and reconstruction of Gödel's proof [5, 4, 6, 24], and a detailed mathematical description is available in [7].

The modal collapse is an interesting example of philosophical controversy and dispute, to which we can apply Leibniz's idea of a *calculus ratiocinator* brought to reality in the form of contemporary automated theorem provers. A significant advantage provided by the use of computers is that all parameters (e.g. modal logic, domain conditions, semantics) under which the announced results hold must be explicitly specified in the source code. This reduces the need for interpretation and the danger of misunderstandings. Current technology is increasingly ready to be embraced by those willing to practice computer-assisted theoretical philosophy [23, 25].

Ongoing and future work includes the computer-assisted study of the modal collapse in other variants of the ontological argument (e.g. [12, 18]). Furthermore, our experiments in Isabelle revealed a weakness of the current integration of the HOL-ATPs LEO-II and Satallax via Sledgehammer: most of the problems in our study solved by the two HOL-ATPs were still too hard to be reconstructed and verified by Isabelle's internal prover Metis. This points to relevant future work regarding the integration of HOL-ATPs in Isabelle.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Paul Weingartner, André Fuhrmann and Melvin Fitting for several discussions about Gödel's ontological argument.

Note about authorship

Alphabetic order has been used for the authors' names. The extent and kind of contribution of each author cannot be inferred from the order.

References

- [1] A.C. Anderson and M. Gettings. Gödel ontological proof revisited. In *Gödel'96: Logical Foundations of Mathematics, Computer Science, and Physics: Lecture Notes in Logic 6*, pages 167–172. Springer, 1996.
- [2] C.A. Anderson. Some emendations of Gödel's ontological proof. *Faith and Philosophy*, 7(3), 1990.
- [3] C. Benzmüller. HOL based universal reasoning. In J.Y. Beziau, A. Buchsbaum, A. Costa-Leite, and A. Altair, editors, *Handbook of the 4th World Congress and School on Universal Logic*, pages 232–233, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2013.
- [4] C. Benzmüller and B. Woltzenlogel Paleo. Formalization, mechanization and automation of Gödel's proof of God's existence. *arXiv:1308.4526*, 2013.
- [5] C. Benzmüller and B. Woltzenlogel Paleo. Gödel's God in Isabelle/HOL. *Archive of Formal Proofs*, 2013, 2013.
- [6] C. Benzmüller and B. Woltzenlogel Paleo. Gödel's God on the computer. In S. Schulz, G. Sutcliffe, and B. Konev, editors, *Proceedings of the 10th International Workshop on the Implementation of Logics*, EPiC Series. EasyChair, 2013. Invited abstract.
- [7] C. Benzmüller and B. Woltzenlogel Paleo. Automating Gödel's ontological proof of God's existence with higher-order automated theorem provers. In T. Schaub, G. Friedrich, and B. O'Sullivan, editors, *ECAI 2014*, volume 263 of *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence and Applications*, pages 163 – 168. IOS Press, 2014.
- [8] C. Benzmüller and L.C. Paulson. Exploring properties of normal multimodal logics in simple type theory with LEO-II. In *Festschrift in Honor of Peter B. Andrews on His 70th Birthday*, pages 386–406. College Publications, 2008.
- [9] C. Benzmüller and L.C. Paulson. Quantified multimodal logics in simple type theory. *Logica Universalis (Special Issue on Multimodal Logics)*, 7(1):7–20, 2013.
- [10] C. Benzmüller, F. Theiss, L. Paulson, and A. Fietzke. LEO-II - a cooperative automatic theorem prover for higher-order logic. In *Proc. of IJCAR 2008*, volume 5195 of *LNAI*, pages 162–170. Springer, 2008.
- [11] Y. Bertot and P. Casteran. *Interactive Theorem Proving and Program Development*. Springer, 2004.
- [12] F. Bjørdal. Understanding gödel's ontological argument. In Timothy Childers, editor, *The Logica Yearbook 1998*. Filosofia, 1999.
- [13] J.C. Blanchette and T. Nipkow. Nitpick: A counterexample generator for higher-order logic based on a relational model finder. In *Proc. of ITP 2010*, number 6172 in *LNCS*, pages 131–146. Springer, 2010.
- [14] C.E. Brown. Satallax: An automated higher-order prover. In *Proc. of IJCAR 2012*, number 7364 in *LNAI*, pages 111 – 117. Springer, 2012.
- [15] S. Chatti and F. Schang. The cube, the square and the problem of existential import. *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 34(2):101–132, 2013.
- [16] R. Corazzon. Contemporary bibliography on the ontological proof (<http://www.ontology.co/biblio/ontological-proof-contemporary-biblio.htm>).
- [17] M. Fitting. *Types, Tableaux and Gödel's God*. Kluwer Academic Press, 2002.
- [18] A. Fuhrmann. Existenz und Notwendigkeit — Kurt Gödels axiomatische Theologie. In W. Spohn et al., editor, *Logik in der Philosophie*. Heidelberg (Synchron), 2005.

- [19] K. Gödel. *Appendix A. Notes in Kurt Gödel's Hand*, pages 144–145. In [28], 2004.
- [20] P. Hajek. A new small emendation of gödel's ontological proof. *Studia Logica*, 71(2):pp. 149–164, 2002.
- [21] P. Hajek. Ontological proofs of existence and non-existence. *Studia Logica*, 90(2):pp. 257–262, 2008.
- [22] T. Nipkow, L.C. Paulson, and M. Wenzel. *Isabelle/HOL: A Proof Assistant for Higher-Order Logic*. Number 2283 in LNCS. Springer, 2002.
- [23] P.E. Oppenheimer and E.N. Zalta. A computationally-discovered simplification of the ontological argument. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 89(2):333–349, 2011.
- [24] B. Woltzenlogel Paleo. Automated verification and reconstruction of Gödel's proof of God's existence. *OCG Journal*, 2013. Invited article.
- [25] J. Rushby. The ontological argument in PVS. In *Proc. of CAV Workshop "Fun With Formal Methods"*, St. Petersburg, Russia,, 2013.
- [26] D. Scott. *Appendix B. Notes in Dana Scott's Hand*, pages 145–146. In [28], 2004.
- [27] J.H. Sobel. Gödel's ontological proof. In *On Being and Saying. Essays for Richard Cartwright*, pages 241–261. MIT Press, 1987.
- [28] J.H. Sobel. *Logic and Theism: Arguments for and Against Beliefs in God*. Cambridge U. Press, 2004.

Christoph Benz Müller
 Department of Mathematics and Computer Science
 Arnimallee 7
 Room 115
 14195 Berlin
 Germany
 e-mail: c.benzmueller@gmail.com

Bruno Woltzenlogel Paleo
 Favoritenstraße 9
 Room HA0402
 1040 Wien
 Austria
 e-mail: bruno.wp@gmail.com