**Outline for Assignment 1**

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Anselm’s ontological argument proves the existence of God by using its existence itself as a premise. But this *a priori* method is actually not supportive enough to show any sort of existence of God. To be specific, his argument is valid, but not sound.

Anselm states in his famous work *Proslogion* that the God exists both in mind and reality. Firstly he provides a definition of God, “something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought”. Simply speaking, it’s an existence without any room for improvement. And due to two premises, namely we understand what this definition is and the understanding of something reflects a sort of existence of that thing in our understanding, hence this definition, “God” exists in our mind. Secondly, Anselm uses a method of *reduction ad absurdum* to disprove that God only exists in mind, that is to say, it also exists in reality. Anselm believes we can conceive God’s existence in reality, even if it only exists in our mind. But this indirectly proves that God is improvable by saying something only exists in mind can be conceived of existing in reality, which is a comparatively higher degree of existence. Therefore, an absurdum happens, so God not only exists in mind, but in reality as well, which completes Anselm’s argument.

We can conclude Anselm’s argument with five premises:

1. We can conceive of something than which nothing greater can be conceived, namely God.
2. We can conceive of an existing being.
3. We can conceive of a nonexisting being.
4. An existing being is greater than a nonexisting one.
5. As God is something than which nothing greater can be conceived and an existing being is greater than a nonexisting one, then God is an existing being.

Conclusion: Hence God exists.

However, William L. Rowe objects in his essay, *Why the Ontological Argument Fails,* that the ontological idea from Anselm does not show enough supportive reasons for the existence of God in the following perspective, namely, the definition of *God*.

First, Rowe states that the definition made by Anselm that God is “an existing, wholly perfect being”, guaranteeing that no nonexisting being can be God. However, whether anything existing can be God is not sure. And he cannot exemplify his concept of God with something existing.

Then Rowe comes up with a new term “possible things” which may either exist or not. And this term, if added to Anselm’s very premise of God’s existence, will complete his proof, thus God is an existing being.

However, a final problem rises along with this addition in premise, that something existing will be “supremely great”. This appears in both premise and conclusion that we need to prove, thus it is still ontological. So Anselm’s argument is not true.

And there may exist another method to deny Anselm’s argument by taking a look back to Anselm’s premises. We actually can have some doubts about premise 1 that whether something than which nothing greater can be thought exists, since there may not be such a “top-level” great being. And if this premise fails, the whole argument of Anselm fails immediately. Even if we assume premise 1 holds, thus premise 2 and 3 also hold, we still can question whether premise 4 holds due to the lack of proof. How do we confirm that existing is a better form than nonexisting? If this not proved yet, we cannot say directly that premise 5 is true. Therefore, the whole argument by Anselm is not true.