Could an argument similar to Anselm’s be used to prove that a perfectly powerful devil exists as the Supreme Being and creator of the universe? In their article “an ontological argument for the devil” (Monist 54, 1970), David and Marjorie Haight pot forth such an argument. Evaluate this argument.

The general purpose of this argument is to show that it is self-contradictory to deny that there exists a greatest possible being. Thus, from here it is a necessary truth that the greatest possible being exists. It is worth reflecting that the argument for the ontological existence of God is necessarily unique, because it cannot be deduced by using information from the world around us. If one were to try to prove the existence of viruses, or unicorns, it would not be enough to simply reflect on the concepts. One would have to go out into the world and conduct an empirical investigation using their senses. In general, positive and negative existential claims concerning a God can only be established using empirical methods.

The ontological argument tries to prove the existence of God by establishing the necessity of God’s existence through an explanation of the concept of existence or necessary being. The same arguments that could be used to prove an all-powerful god, could also be used to prove the existence of an all-powerful devil. For example it is conceivable in our minds the existence of a being of which none more evil can exist. A being which exists in reality would be inherently more evil than one which exists in the mind, therefore there must exist a being in reality of which none more evil can be conceived. Logically, this follows in the same fashion that Anselm’s argument follows. The argument which could prove the existence of a being more evil than which no other can be conceived follows just as easily as the argument of a being of which none greater can be conceived. Using Anselm’s logic we can now conceive of two all-powerful beings, one which is an all-powerful god, and one which is an all-powerful devil. This incites a contradiction, because there cannot exist two all-powerful beings, for one’s power must be subordinate to the other. This is an example of the weakness in this type of theorizing. While the logic of the argument flows nicely, there arises a contradiction in this type of theorizing.

It is also interesting to note, that while all qualities of the greatest possible being are “good” qualities, not all of the qualities of the worst possible being are “bad” qualities. Some qualities of the worst possible being that could be considered “good” qualities include cunningness, intelligence, etc. For of course the devil should be cunning and intelligent, otherwise he would be too easy to contain.