

= Ontological argument =

An ontological argument is a philosophical argument for the existence of God that uses ontology . Many arguments fall under the category of the ontological , and they tend to involve arguments about the state of being or existing . More specifically , ontological arguments tend to start with an a priori theory about the organization of the universe . If that organizational structure is true , the argument will provide reasons why God must exist .

The first ontological argument in the Western Christian tradition was proposed by Anselm of Canterbury in his 1078 work *Proslogion* . Anselm defined God as " that than which nothing greater can be conceived " , and argued that this being must exist in the mind ; even in the mind of the person who denies the existence of God . He suggested that , if the greatest possible being exists in the mind , it must also exist in reality . If it only exists in the mind , then an even greater being must be possible ? one which exists both in the mind and in reality . Therefore , this greatest possible being must exist in reality . Seventeenth century French philosopher René Descartes deployed a similar argument . Descartes published several variations of his argument , each of which centred on the idea that God 's existence is immediately inferable from a " clear and distinct " idea of a supremely perfect being . In the early eighteenth century , Gottfried Leibniz augmented Descartes ' ideas in an attempt to prove that a " supremely perfect " being is a coherent concept . A more recent ontological argument came from Kurt Gödel , who proposed a formal argument for God 's existence . Norman Malcolm revived the ontological argument in 1960 when he located a second , stronger ontological argument in Anselm 's work ; Alvin Plantinga challenged this argument and proposed an alternative , based on modal logic . Attempts have also been made to validate Anselm 's proof using an automated theorem prover . Other arguments have been categorised as ontological , including those made by Islamic philosopher Mulla Sadra .

Since its proposal , few philosophical ideas have generated as much interest and discussion as the ontological argument . Nearly all of the great minds of Western philosophy have found the argument worthy of their attention and criticism . The general consensus is that the argument is erroneous . However , consensus as to the exact nature of the argument 's error or errors has long proved elusive to the philosophical community . The first critic of the ontological argument was Anselm 's contemporary , Gaunilo of Marmoutiers . He used the analogy of a perfect island , suggesting that the ontological argument could be used to prove the existence of anything . This was the first of many parodies , all of which attempted to show that the argument has absurd consequences . Later , Thomas Aquinas rejected the argument on the basis that humans cannot know God 's nature . Also , David Hume offered an empirical objection , criticising its lack of evidential reasoning and rejecting the idea that anything can exist necessarily . Immanuel Kant 's critique was based on what he saw as the false premise that existence is a predicate . He argued that " existing " adds nothing ( including perfection ) to the essence of a being , and thus a " supremely perfect " being can be conceived not to exist . Finally , philosophers including C. D. Broad dismissed the coherence of a maximally great being , proposing that some attributes of greatness are incompatible with others , rendering " maximally great being " incoherent .

= = Classification = =

The traditional definition of an ontological argument was given by Immanuel Kant . He contrasted the ontological argument ( literally any argument " concerned with being " ) with the cosmological and physio @-@ theoretical arguments . According to the Kantian view , ontological arguments are those founded on a priori reasoning .

Graham Oppy , who elsewhere expressed the view that he " see [ s ] no urgent reason " to depart from the traditional definition , defined ontological arguments as those that begin with " nothing but analytic , a priori and necessary premises " and conclude that God exists . Oppy admitted , however , that not all of the " traditional characteristics " of an ontological argument ( analyticity , necessity , and a priority ) are found in all ontological arguments and , in his 2007 work *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* , suggested that a better definition of an ontological argument would employ only

considerations " entirely internal to the theistic worldview " .

Oppy subclassified ontological arguments into definitional , conceptual ( or hyperintensional ) , modal , Meinongian , experiential , mereological , higher @-@ order , or Hegelian categories , based on the qualities of their premises . He defined these qualities as follows : definitional arguments invoke definitions ; conceptual arguments invoke " the possession of certain kinds of ideas or concepts " ; modal arguments consider possibilities ; Meinongian arguments assert " a distinction between different categories of existence " ; experiential arguments employ the idea that God exists solely to those who have had experience of him ; and Hegelian arguments are from Hegel . He later categorised mereological as arguments that " draw on ? the theory of the whole @-@ part relation " .

William Lane Craig criticised Oppy 's study as too vague for useful classification . Craig argued that an argument can be classified as ontological if it attempts to deduce the existence of God , along with other necessary truths , from his definition . He suggested that proponents of ontological arguments would claim that , if one fully understood the concept of God , one must accept his existence . William L. Rowe defined ontological arguments as those that start from the definition of God and , using only a priori principles , conclude with God 's existence .

= = Development = =

Although the ontological argument may have been implicit in the works of Greek philosophers such as Plato and the Neoplatonists , the mainstream view is that the ontological argument was first clearly stated and developed by Anselm of Canterbury . Some scholars argued that the Islamic philosopher Avicenna ( Ibn Sina ) developed a special kind of ontological argument before Anselm , but other scholars have doubted this position . Daniel Dombrowski marked three major stages in the development of the argument : Anselm 's initial explicit formulation ; the eighteenth century criticisms of Kant and Hume ; and the identification of a second ontological argument in Anselm 's Proslogion by twentieth century philosophers .

= = = Anselm = = =

Theologian and philosopher Anselm of Canterbury ( 1033 ? 1109 ) proposed an ontological argument in the second and third chapters of his Proslogion . Anselm 's argument was not presented in order to prove God 's existence ; rather , Proslogion was a work of meditation in which he documented how the idea of God became self @-@ evident to him .

In Chapter 2 of the Proslogion , Anselm defined God as a " being than which no greater can be conceived " . He suggested that even " the fool " can understand this concept , and this understanding itself means that the being must exist in the mind . The concept must exist either only in our mind , or in both our mind and in reality . If such a being exists only in our mind , then a greater being ? that which exists in the mind and in reality ? can be conceived ( this argument is generally regarded as a reductio ad absurdum because the view of the fool is proven to be inconsistent ) . Therefore , if we can conceive of a being than which nothing greater can be conceived , it must exist in reality . Thus , a being than which nothing greater could be conceived , which Anselm defined as God , must exist in reality .

Anselm 's argument in Chapter 2 can be summarized as follows :

It is a conceptual truth ( or , so to speak , true by definition ) that God is a being than which none greater can be imagined ( that is , the greatest possible being that can be imagined ) .

God exists as an idea in the mind .

A being that exists as an idea in the mind and in reality is , other things being equal , greater than a being that exists only as an idea in the mind .

Thus , if God exists only as an idea in the mind , then we can imagine something that is greater than God ( that is , a greatest possible being that does exist ) .

But we cannot imagine something that is greater than God ( for it is a contradiction to suppose that we can imagine a being greater than the greatest possible being that can be imagined . )

Therefore , God exists .

In Chapter 3 , Anselm presented a further argument in the same vein :

By definition , God is a being than which none greater can be imagined .

A being that necessarily exists in reality is greater than a being that does not necessarily exist .

Thus , by definition , if God exists as an idea in the mind but does not necessarily exist in reality , then we can imagine something that is greater than God .

But we cannot imagine something that is greater than God .

Thus , if God exists in the mind as an idea , then God necessarily exists in reality .

God exists in the mind as an idea .

Therefore , God necessarily exists in reality .

This contains the notion of a being that cannot be conceived not to exist . He argued that if something can be conceived not to exist , then something greater can be conceived . Consequently , a thing than which nothing greater can be conceived cannot be conceived not to exist and so it must exist . This can be read as a restatement of the argument in Chapter 2 , although Norman Malcolm believed it to be a different , stronger argument .

= = = René Descartes = = =

René Descartes ( 1596 ? 1650 ) composed a number of ontological arguments , which differed from Anselm 's formulation . Generally speaking , they are less formal arguments than natural intuition .

Descartes wrote in the Fifth Meditation :

But , if the mere fact that I can produce from my thought the idea of something that entails everything that I clearly and distinctly perceive to belong to that thing really does belong to it , is not this a possible basis for another argument to prove the existence of God ? Certainly , the idea of God , or a supremely perfect being , is one that I find within me just as surely as the idea of any shape or number . And my understanding that it belongs to his nature that he always exists is no less clear and distinct than is the case when I prove of any shape or number that some property belongs to its nature .

Descartes argued that God 's existence can be deduced from his nature , just as geometric ideas can be deduced from the nature of shapes ? he used the deduction of the sizes of angles in a triangle as an example . He suggested that the concept of God is that of a supremely perfect being , holding all perfections . He seems to have assumed that existence is a predicate of a perfection . Thus , if the notion of God did not include existence , it would not be supremely perfect , as it would be lacking a perfection . Consequently , the notion of a supremely perfect God who does not exist , Descartes argues , is unintelligible . Therefore , according to his nature , God must exist .

= = = Gottfried Leibniz = = =

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz saw a problem with Descartes ' ontological argument : that Descartes had not asserted the coherence of a " supremely perfect " being . He proposed that , unless the coherence of a supremely perfect being could be demonstrated , the ontological argument fails . Leibniz saw perfection as impossible to analyse ; therefore , it would be impossible to demonstrate that all perfections are incompatible . He reasoned that all perfections can exist together in a single entity , and that Descartes ' argument is still valid .

= = = Mulla Sadra = = =

Mulla Sadra ( c . 1571 / 2 ? 1640 ) was an Iranian Shia Islamic philosopher who was influenced by earlier Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna and Suhrawardi , as well as the Sufi metaphysician Ibn ' Arabi . Sadra discussed Avicenna 's arguments for the existence of God , claiming that they were not a priori . He rejected the argument on the basis that existence precedes essence , or that the existence of human beings is more fundamental than their essence .

Sadra put forward a new argument , known as Seddiqin Argument or Argument of the Righteous .

The argument attempts to prove the existence of God through the reality of existence , and to conclude with God 's pre @-@ eternal necessity . In this argument , a thing is demonstrated through itself , and a path is identical with the goal . In other arguments , the truth is attained from an external source , such as from the possible to the necessary , from the originated to the eternal origin , or from motion to the unmoved mover . In the argument of the righteous , there is no middle term other than the truth . His version of the ontological argument can be summarized as follows :

There is existence

Existence is a perfection above which no perfection may be conceived

God is perfection and perfection in existence

Existence is a singular and simple reality ; there is no metaphysical pluralism

That singular reality is graded in intensity in a scale of perfection ( that is , a denial of a pure monism ) .

That scale must have a limit point , a point of greatest intensity and of greatest existence .

Hence God exists .

Mulla Sadra describes this argument in his main work al @-@ asfar al @-@ arba ? a [ four journeys ] as follows :

Existence is a single , objective and simple reality , and there is no difference between its parts , unless in terms of perfection and imperfection , strength , and weakness ? And the culmination of its perfection , where there is nothing more perfect , is its independence from any other thing . Nothing more perfect should be conceivable , as every imperfect thing belongs to another thing and needs to become perfect . And , as it has already been explicated , perfection is prior to imperfection , actuality to potency , and existence to non @-@ existence . Also , it has been explained that the perfection of a thing is the thing itself , and not a thing in addition to it . Thus , either existence is independent of others or it is in need of others . The former is the Necessary , which is pure existence . Nothing is more perfect than Him . And in Him there is no room for non @-@ existence or imperfection . The latter is other than Him , and is regarded as His acts and effects , and for other than Him there is no subsistence , unless through Him . For there is no imperfection in the reality of existence , and imperfection is added to existence only because of the quality of being caused , as it is impossible for an effect to be identical with its cause in terms of existence .

= = = Kurt Gödel = = =

Mathematician Kurt Gödel provided a formal argument for God 's existence . The argument was constructed by Gödel but not published until long after his death . He provided a logically valid argument based on modal logic ; he uses the conception of properties , ultimately concluding with God 's existence .

Definition 1 : x is God @-@ like if and only if x has as essential properties those and only those properties which are positive

Definition 2 : A is an essence of x if and only if for every property B , x has B necessarily if and only if A entails B

Definition 3 : x necessarily exists if and only if every essence of x is necessarily exemplified

Axiom 1 : If a property is positive , then its negation is not positive

Axiom 2 : Any property entailed by ? i.e. , strictly implied by ? a positive property is positive

Axiom 3 : The property of being God @-@ like is positive

Axiom 4 : If a property is positive , then it is necessarily positive

Axiom 5 : Necessary existence is positive

Axiom 6 : For any property P , if P is positive , then being necessarily P is positive

Theorem 1 : If a property is positive , then it is consistent , i.e. , possibly exemplified

Corollary 1 : The property of being God @-@ like is consistent

Theorem 2 : If something is God @-@ like , then the property of being God @-@ like is an essence of that thing

Theorem 3 : Necessarily , the property of being God @-@ like is exemplified

Gödel defined being " god @-@ like " as having every positive property . He left the term " positive "

undefined . Gödel proposed that it is understood in an aesthetic and moral sense , or alternatively as the opposite of privation ( the absence of necessary qualities in the universe ) . He warned against interpreting " positive " as being morally or aesthetically " good " ( the greatest advantage and least disadvantage ) , as this includes negative characteristics . Instead , he suggested that " positive " should be interpreted as being perfect , or " purely good " , without negative characteristics .

Gödel 's listed theorems follow from the axioms , so most criticisms of the theory focus on those axioms or the assumptions made . Oppy argued that Gödel gives no definition of " positive properties " . He suggested that if these positive properties form a set , there is no reason to believe that any such set exists which is theologically interesting , or that there is only one set of positive properties which is theologically interesting .

= = = Modal versions of the ontological argument = = =

Modal logic deals with the logic of possibility as well as necessity . Paul Oppenheimer and Edward N. Zalta note that , for Anselm 's Proslogion chapter 2 , " Many recent authors have interpreted this argument as a modal one . " In the phrase ' that than which none greater can be conceived ' , the word ' can ' could be construed as referring to a possibility . Nevertheless , the authors write that " the logic of the ontological argument itself doesn 't include inferences based on this modality . " However , there have been newer , avowedly modal logic versions of the ontological argument , and on the application of this type of logic to the argument , James Franklin Harris writes :

[ D ]ifferent versions of the ontological argument , the so @-@ called " modal " versions of the argument , which arguably avoid the part of Anselm 's argument that " treats existence as a predicate , " began to emerge . The [ modal logic version ] of these forms of defense of the ontological argument has been the most significant development .

= = = Hartshorne and Malcolm = = =

Charles Hartshorne and Norman Malcolm are primarily responsible for introducing modal versions of the argument into the contemporary debate . Both claimed that Anselm had two versions of the ontological argument , the second of which was a modal logic version . According to James Harris , this version is represented by Malcolm thus :

If it [ that than which nothing greater can be conceived ] can be conceived at all it must exist . For no one who denies or doubts the existence of a being a greater than which is inconceivable , denies or doubts that if it did exist its nonexistence , either in reality or in the understanding , would be impossible . For otherwise it would not be a being a greater than which cannot be conceived . But as to whatever can be conceived but does not exist : if it were to exist its nonexistence either in reality or in the understanding would be possible . Therefore , if a being a greater than which cannot be conceived , can even be conceived , it must exist .

Hartshorne says that , for Anselm , " necessary existence is a superior manner of existence to ordinary , contingent existence and that ordinary , contingent existence is a defect . " For Hartshorne , both Hume and Kant focused only upon whether what exists is greater than what does not exist . However , " Anselm 's point is that what exists and cannot not exist is greater than that which exists and can not exist . " This avoids the question of whether or not existence is a predicate .

Referring to the two ontological arguments proposed by Anselm in Chapters 2 and 3 of his Proslogion , Malcolm supported Kant 's criticism of Anselm 's argument in Chapter 2 : that existence cannot be a perfection of something . However , he identified what he sees as the second ontological argument in Chapter 3 which is not susceptible to such criticism .

In Anselm 's second argument , Malcolm identified two key points : first , that a being whose non @-@ existence is logically impossible is greater than a being whose non @-@ existence is logically possible , and second , that God is a being " than which a greater cannot be conceived " . Malcolm supported that definition of God and suggested that it makes the proposition of God 's existence a logically necessarily true statement ( in the same way that " a square has four sides " is logically

necessarily true ) . Thus , while rejecting the idea of existence itself being a perfection , Malcolm argued that necessary existence is a perfection . This , he argued , proved the existence of an unsurpassably great necessary being .

Jordon Sobel writes that Malcolm is incorrect in assuming that the argument he is expounding is to be found entirely in Proslogion chapter 3 . " Anselm intended in Proslogion III not an independent argument for the existence of God , but a continuation of the argument of Proslogion II . "

= = = = Alvin Plantinga = = = =

Christian Analytic philosopher Alvin Plantinga criticized Malcolm 's and Hartshorne 's arguments , and offered an alternative . He argued that , if Malcolm does prove the necessary existence of the greatest possible being , it follows that there is a being which exists in all worlds whose greatness in some worlds is not surpassed . It does not , he argued , demonstrate that such a being has unsurpassed greatness in this world .

In an attempt to resolve this problem , Plantinga differentiated between " greatness " and " excellence " . A being 's excellence in a particular world depends only on its properties in that world ; a being 's greatness depends on its properties in all worlds . Therefore , the greatest possible being must have maximal excellence in every possible world . Plantinga then restated Malcolm 's argument , using the concept of " maximal greatness " . He argued that it is possible for a being with maximal greatness to exist , so a being with maximal greatness exists in a possible world . If this is the case , then a being with maximal greatness exists in every world , and therefore in this world .

The conclusion relies on a form of modal axiom S5 , which states that if something is possibly true , then its possibility is necessary ( it is possibly true in all worlds ) . Plantinga 's version of S5 suggests that " To say that p is possibly necessarily true is to say that , with regard to one world , it is true at all worlds ; but in that case it is true at all worlds , and so it is simply necessary . " A version of his argument is as follows :

A being has maximal excellence in a given possible world W if and only if it is omnipotent , omniscient and wholly good in W ; and

A being has maximal greatness if it has maximal excellence in every possible world .

It is possible that there is a being that has maximal greatness . ( Premise )

Therefore , possibly , it is necessarily true that an omniscient , omnipotent , and perfectly good being exists .

Therefore , ( by axiom S5 ) it is necessarily true that an omniscient , omnipotent and perfectly good being exists .

Therefore , an omniscient , omnipotent and perfectly good being exists .

Plantinga argued that , although the first premise is not rationally established , it is not contrary to reason . Michael Martin argued that , if certain components of perfection are contradictory , such as omnipotence and omniscience , then the first premise is contrary to reason . Martin also proposed parodies of the argument , suggesting that the existence of anything can be demonstrated with Plantinga 's argument , provided it is defined as perfect or special in every possible world .

Another Christian apologist , William Lane Craig , characterizes Plantinga 's argument in a slightly different way :

It is possible that a maximally great being exists .

If it is possible that a maximally great being exists , then a maximally great being exists in some possible world .

If a maximally great being exists in some possible world , then it exists in every possible world .

If a maximally great being exists in every possible world , then it exists in the actual world .

If a maximally great being exists in the actual world , then a maximally great being exists .

Therefore , a maximally great being exists .

According to Craig , premises ( 2 ) - ( 5 ) are relatively uncontroversial among philosophers , but " the epistemic entertainability of premise ( 1 ) ( or its denial ) does not guarantee its metaphysical possibility . " Furthermore , Richard M. Gale argued that premise three , the " possibility premise " , begs the question . He stated that one only has the epistemic right to accept the premise if one

understands the nested modal operators , and that if one understands them within the system S5 ? without which the argument fails ? then one understands that " possibly necessarily " is in essence the same as " necessarily " . Thus the premise begs the question because the conclusion is embedded within it . On S5 systems in general , James Garson writes that " the words ? necessarily ? and ? possibly ? , have many different uses . So the acceptability of axioms for modal logic depends on which of these uses we have in mind . "

= = = Sankara 's dictum = = =

An approach to supporting the possibility premise in Plantinga 's version of the argument was attempted by Alexander R. Pruss . He started with the 8th ? 9th century AD Indian philosopher Sankara 's dictum that if something is impossible , we cannot have a perception ( even a non @-@ veridical one ) that it is the case . It follows that if we have a perception that p , then even though it might not be the case that p , it is at least the case that possibly p . If mystics in fact perceive the existence of a maximally great being , it follows that the existence of a maximally great being is at least possible .

= = = Automated reasoning = = =

Paul Oppenheimer and Edward Zalta used an automated theorem prover ? Prover9 ? to validate Anselm 's ontological thesis . Prover9 subsequently discovered a simpler , formally valid ( if not necessarily sound ) ontological argument from a single non @-@ logical premise .

= = Criticisms and objections = =

= = = Gaunilo = = =

One of the earliest recorded objections to Anselm 's argument was raised by one of Anselm 's contemporaries , Gaunilo of Marmoutiers . He invited his reader to conceive an island " more excellent " than any other island . He suggested that , according to Anselm 's proof , this island must necessarily exist , as an island that exists would be more excellent . Gaunilo 's criticism does not explicitly demonstrate a flaw in Anselm 's argument ; rather , it argues that if Anselm 's argument is sound , so are many other arguments of the same logical form , which cannot be accepted . He offered a further criticism of Anselm 's ontological argument , suggesting that the notion of God cannot be conceived , as Anselm had asserted . He argued that many theists would accept that God , by nature , cannot be fully comprehended . Therefore , if humans cannot fully conceive of God , the ontological argument cannot work .

Anselm responded to Gaunilo 's criticism by arguing that the argument applied only to concepts with necessary existence . He suggested that only a being with necessary existence can fulfill the remit of " that than which nothing greater can be conceived " . Furthermore , a contingent object , such as an island , could always be improved and thus could never reach a state of perfection . For that reason , Anselm dismissed any argument that did not relate to a being with necessary existence .

Other parodies have been presented , including the devil corollary , the no devil corollary and the extreme no devil corollary . The devil corollary proposes that a being than which nothing worse can be conceived exists in the understanding ( sometimes the term lesser is used in place of worse ) . Using Anselm 's logical form , the parody argues that if it exists in the understanding , a worse being would be one that exists in reality ; thus , such a being exists . The no devil corollary is similar , but argues that a worse being would be one that does not exist in reality , so does not exist . The extreme no devil corollary advances on this , proposing that a worse being would be that which does not exist in the understanding , so such a being exists neither in reality nor in the understanding . Timothy Chambers argued that the devil corollary is more powerful than Gaunilo 's challenge

because it withstands the challenges that may defeat Gaunilo 's parody . He also claimed that the no devil corollary is a strong challenge , as it " underwrites " the no devil corollary , which " threatens Anselm 's argument at its very foundations " .

= = = Thomas Aquinas = = =

Thomas Aquinas , while proposing five proofs of God 's existence in his Summa Theologica , objected to Anselm 's argument . He suggested that people cannot know the nature of God and , therefore , cannot conceive of God in the way Anselm proposed . The ontological argument would be meaningful only to someone who understands the essence of God completely . Aquinas reasoned that , as only God can completely know His essence , only He could use the argument . His rejection of the ontological argument caused other Catholic theologians to also reject the argument .

= = = David Hume = = =

Scottish philosopher and empiricist David Hume argued that nothing can be proven to exist using only a priori reasoning . In his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion , the character Cleanthes proposes a criticism :

... there is an evident absurdity in pretending to demonstrate a matter of fact , or to prove it by any arguments a priori . Nothing is demonstrable , unless the contrary implies a contradiction . Nothing , that is distinctly conceivable , implies a contradiction . Whatever we conceive as existent , we can also conceive as non @-@ existent . There is no being , therefore , whose non @-@ existence implies a contradiction . Consequently there is no being , whose existence is demonstrable .

Hume also suggested that , as we have no abstract idea of existence ( apart from as part of our ideas of other objects ) , we cannot claim that the idea of God implies his existence . He suggested that any conception of God we may have , we can conceive either of existing or of not existing . He believed that existence is not a quality ( or perfection ) , so a completely perfect being need not exist . Thus , he claimed that it is not a contradiction to deny God 's existence . Although this criticism is directed against a cosmological argument , similar to that of Samuel Clarke in his first Boyle Lecture , it has been applied to ontological arguments as well .

= = = Immanuel Kant = = =

Immanuel Kant put forward an influential criticism of the ontological argument in his Critique of Pure Reason . His criticism is primarily directed at Descartes , but also attacks Leibniz . It is shaped by his central distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions . In an analytic proposition , the predicate concept is contained in its subject concept ; in a synthetic proposition , the predicate concept is not contained in its subject concept .

Kant questions the intelligibility of the concept of a necessary being . He considers examples of necessary propositions , such as " a triangle has three angles " , and rejects the transfer of this logic to the existence of God . First , he argues that such necessary propositions are necessarily true only if such a being exists : If a triangle exists , it must have three angles . The necessary proposition , he argues , does not make the existence of a triangle necessary . Thus he argues that , if the proposition " X exists " is posited , it would follow that , if X exists , it exists necessarily ; this does not mean that X exists in reality . Second , he argues that contradictions arise only when the subject and predicate are maintained and , therefore , a judgement of non @-@ existence cannot be a contradiction , as it denies the predicate .

Kant then proposes that the statement " God exists " must be analytic or synthetic ? the predicate must be inside or outside of the subject , respectively . If the proposition is analytic , as the ontological argument takes it to be , then the statement would be true only because of the meaning given to the words . Kant claims that this is merely a tautology and cannot say anything about reality . However , if the statement is synthetic , the ontological argument does not work , as the existence



of God is not contained within the definition of God ( and , as such , evidence for God would need to be found ) .

Kant goes on to write , " ' being ' is evidently not a real predicate " and cannot be part of the concept of something . He proposes that existence is not a predicate , or quality . This is because existence does not add to the essence of a being , but merely indicates its occurrence in reality . He states that by taking the subject of God with all its predicates and then asserting that God exists , " I add no new predicate to the conception of God " . He argues that the ontological argument works only if existence is a predicate ; if this is not so , he claims the ontological argument is invalidated , as it is then conceivable a completely perfect being doesn't exist .

In addition , Kant claims that the concept of God is not of one a particular sense ; rather , it is an " object of pure thought " . He asserts that God exists outside the realm of experience and nature . Because we cannot experience God through experience , Kant argues that it is impossible to know how we would verify God 's existence . This is in contrast to material concepts , which can be verified by means of the senses .

= = = Douglas Gasking = = =

Australian philosopher Douglas Gasking ( 1911 ? 1994 ) developed a version of the ontological argument meant to prove God 's non @-@ existence . It was not intended to be serious ; rather , its purpose was to illustrate the problems Gasking saw in the ontological argument .

Gasking asserted that the creation of the world is the most marvellous achievement imaginable . The merit of such an achievement is the product of its quality and the creator 's disability : the greater the disability of the creator , the more impressive the achievement . Non @-@ existence , Gasking asserts , would be the greatest handicap . Therefore , if the universe is the product of an existent creator , we could conceive of a greater being ? one which does not exist . A non @-@ existent creator is greater than one which exists , so God does not exist . Gasking 's proposition that the greatest disability would be non @-@ existence is a response to Anselm 's assumption that existence is a predicate and perfection . Gasking uses this logic to assume that non @-@ existence must be a disability .

Oppy criticized the argument , viewing it as a weak parody of the ontological argument . He stated that , although it may be accepted that it would be a greater achievement for a non @-@ existent creator to create something than a creator who exists , there is no reason to assume that a non @-@ existent creator would be a greater being . He continued by arguing that there is no reason to view the creation of the world as " the most marvellous achievement imaginable " . Finally , he stated that it may be inconceivable for a non @-@ existent being to create anything at all .

= = = Coherence of a maximally great being = = =

In his development of the ontological argument , Leibniz attempted to demonstrate the coherence of a supremely perfect being . C. D. Broad countered that if two characteristics necessary for God 's perfection are incompatible with a third , the notion of a supremely perfect being becomes incoherent . The ontological argument assumes the definition of God purported by classical theism : that God is omnipotent , omniscient , and morally perfect . Kenneth Einar Himma claimed that omniscience and omnipotence may be incompatible : if God is omnipotent , then he should be able to create a being with free will ; if he is omniscient , then he should know exactly what such a being will do ( thus rendering them without free will ) . This analysis would render the ontological argument incoherent , as the characteristics required of a maximally great being cannot coexist in one being , thus such a being could not exist .

= = = Other criticisms = = =

Bertrand Russell , during his early Hegelian phase , accepted the argument ; once exclaiming : " Great God in Boots ! ? the ontological argument is sound ! " However , he later criticized the

argument , asserting that " the argument does not , to a modern mind , seem very convincing , but it is easier to feel convinced that it must be fallacious than it is to find out precisely where the fallacy lies . " He drew a distinction between existence and essence , arguing that the essence of a person can be described and their existence still remain in question .