

# M20HSS316-ITP/Assignment-3/20171213/CSD

## Part 1 ---- Gaunilo's argument and similarity with Anslem's argument.

In response to Anslem, Gaunilo constructed a parody which is akin to that of Anslem's argument resulting in a contradiction. This is the same as instantiating a particular flow of premises with some other example for which there is a contradiction and thus invalidating the original set of premises. Gaunilo's argument can be structured as Anslem's ontological argument (reference: philosophy lecture) as follows,

1. X is an **island** than which no greater **island** can be conceived. Greater island as in with all manner of riches, delicacies and more excellent than any other country. (definition)
2. Existence in the understanding and existence in reality are two separate things. (**same as Anslem's**)
3. Existence in reality is greater than existence in understanding. (**same as Anslem's**)
4. "some **island** than which a greater **island** cannot be conceived" is understood i.e. there is no doubt that such an island exists in one's imagination.
5. If something is understood, then it exists in the understanding. (**same as Anslem's**)
6. "some **island** than which a greater **island** cannot be conceived" exists in the understanding (4, 5).
7. "some **island** than which a greater **island** cannot be conceived" can exist only in the understanding (assumption of reductio)
8. It is greater for "some **island** than which a greater **island** cannot be conceived" to exist in reality than for it to just exist in the understanding.

-- Till now, **the premises are similar as that of Anslem's** with some changes or addition of the word "**island**" as highlighted in bold.

Now, the premise, some island existing in reality is greater than the present one in understanding (which we were assuming was the maximal) leads to the **reductio ad absurdum** that "the island which is no more excellent is maximal" which is a **contradiction** of what we perceive and believe.

## Part 2 ---- Mistake in Gaunilo's argument

Gaunilo's (or similar type) argument is constraining the whole idea of maximality for that of an island (or something else), whereas in Anslem's there were no such restrictions. **An island can only be compared to another island**, hence we can not compare an idea which is not "an island" with the given "some **island** than which a greater **island** cannot be conceived" hence **a fallacy**.

Anslem's kind of argument only works for this whole maximal being which is greater than any idea or tangible entity (which can be conceived), as the comparison is not a problem here, the notion works with any idea. Hence, Gaunilo (or similar type) arguments don't add up to falsify Anslem's arguments.

Also, one can always think of non-existence of any island as a possibility or imagination, in that realm as the island can only be compared with another island, there can not exist such "some **island** than which a greater **island** cannot be conceived", as there is no other island to compare with leading to **another fallacy**. Such a problem is not there in Anslem's argument.