

Group #1 (Chapter 2 *Proslogion*) What is Anselm’s Argument?

THE CONCEPTUAL ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT (ANSELM'S ARGUMENT)

1. I can conceive of a being of which no greater can be conceived that does not exist.
2. If I can conceive of a being of which no greater than can be conceived but that being does not exist, then I can conceive of a being of which no greater can be conceived that exists.
3. Therefore, I can conceive of a being of which no greater can be conceived that exists and I can conceive of a being of which no greater can be conceived that does not exist.
Contradiction!
4. A being than which no greater can be conceived exists.

Reconstruct Anselm’s argument premise by premise. Start with (1), articulate what it means and its rationale, and then move to (2), (3), and finally, the conclusion. Try to make the argument as strong as possible by considering what someone who does not believe in God thinks, e.g. according to Anselm, does someone who objects to God’s existence accept or reject premise (1)? Finally, how convincing do you find this argument? If you don’t find it convincing, which premise is problematic and why?

Group #2 (The Nature of Necessity) What is Plantinga’s Modal Ontological Argument?

First, define ‘God’ as follows:

God=df. the being than which nothing greater can be conceived.

1	God exists in the understanding but not in reality.	Assumption
2	Existence in reality is greater than existence in the understanding alone.	Premise
3	God’s existence is conceivable.	Premise
4	If God did exist in reality, then he would be greater than if he existed only in the understanding.	from (1) and (2)
5	It is conceivable that there is a being greater than God is (i.e. greater than one that exists in the understanding)	from (3) and (4)
6	It is conceivable that there is a being greater than the being that no greater can be conceived.	from (5) and the df. of ‘God’
7	<i>It is not the case that:</i> it is conceivable that there is a being greater than the being that no greater can be conceived.	Premise
8	The original assumption is false. That is, it is false that God exists in the understanding but not in reality.	Conclusion (from contradiction in 6 and 7)

Reconstruct Plantinga’s interpretation of Anselm’s argument premise by premise (see above). Which premise does Plantinga take to be the most problematic? How does Plantinga articulate what makes a ‘great-making’ property? Premise (2) relies on the assumption that ‘existence in reality is a great-making property’; what is one problem with this (see bottom of p.200 to top of p.201)? How does Plantinga escape this problem?

Finally, how convincing do you find this argument? If you don't find it convincing, which premise is problematic and why?

Group #3 Objections to the Ontological Argument

Review either Anselm's or Plantinga's formulation of the ontological argument and come up with an objection to either version. Write your argument on the board with a diagram that illustrates this objection. Be sure to state which premise you are attacking and why you are arguing against it. Also, be sure to make sure you understand the details of the argument (you don't want your objection to be built upon a fault understanding of the argument).