

Symposium Notes on the Ontological Proof For The Existence of God

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1 Introduction

This is a brief attempt to outline a form of the ontological proof of God's existence as given by Anselm in *Proslogian II*. It is somewhat inspired by Graham Oppy's article on the SEP about the Ontological Argument.

2 Proof

1. God is that nothing greater than which can be thought. (premise)
2. I understand that this is what God is. (premise)
3. Therefore, God exists at least in my mind as a concept. (from 1 and 2)
4. Existing in reality is greater than existing merely as a concept in my mind. (premise)
5. If God can be thought of as existing in my mind alone, then I could think of something greater than God. (from 4)
6. If God is thought of as existing in my mind but not in reality, then God is both that nothing greater than which can be thought (from 1), and that something greater than which can be thought (from 5), which is a contradiction.
7. Thus, God cannot exist in the mind but not in reality. (from 5)
8. Hence, God must exist in reality. (from 3 and 7)

3 Anselm's Original Argument

From the *Proslogian II*:

“Thus even the fool is convinced that something than which nothing greater can be conceived is in the understanding, since when he hears this, he understands it; and whatever is understood is in the understanding. And certainly that than which a greater cannot be conceived cannot be in the understanding alone. For if it is even in the understanding alone, it can be conceived to exist in reality also, which is greater. Thus if that than which a greater cannot be conceived is in the understanding alone, then that than which a greater cannot be conceived is itself that than which a greater can be conceived. But surely this cannot be. Thus without doubt something than which a greater cannot be conceived exists, both in the understanding and in reality.”