

Key concepts:

- A **deductive** argument works on the principles of logical necessity. Every stage of a deductive argument must be the only logical step available.
- The **premise** is a key factor in a deductive argument.
- The ontological argument works from a **definition of God** as its premise.
- Indeed, it is the premise of the argument that has faced the most challenges.

- **Anselm Proslogion 2 (P2):** God's existence is a **logical necessity**.
- Anselm defines God as 'that-than-which-none-greater-can-be-thought' (**TTWNGCBT**) i.e. the greatest being imaginable.
- To be TTWNGCBT it is logically necessary for God to exist since:
 - (1) There are two ways that we could conceive of God.
 - (a) TTWNGCBT could merely be a concept (mind).
 - (b) TTWNGCBT could also be both a concept and a reality (mind and reality).
 - (2) If TTWNGCBT were simply a concept (mind only) then we can think of something greater i.e. TTWNGCBT that is both mind and reality.
 - (3) But this is illogical since TTWNGCBT (mind) cannot be TTWNGCBT because there is something greater TTWNGCBT (mind and reality).
 - (4) Therefore, to be TTWNGCBT God must exist in both the mind and reality.

- **The Anselm Proslogion 3 (P3):** God's non-existence is a **logically impossibility**.
- In some ways this is more straight-forward than Anselm's first argument.
- This argument builds upon TTWNGCBT and the notion of existence.
- Existence has a limit in that it is also possible for non-existence.
- However, for God to be TTWNGCBT God's existence must be a logical necessity – not because it is the opposite of contingent existence as some often propose (that is the cosmological

argument) – but because it is impossible to think of TTWNGCBT as not-existing in the first instance.

- TTWNGCBT must exist because TTWNGCBT cannot be thought of as not-existing as this would mean that there exists a TTWNGCBT for which it is possible to not-exist but that it is also possible to think of a greater TTWNGCBT which **cannot** not exist. This is illogical.
- Therefore, to be TTWNGCBT God must be a being that **cannot** not exist.
- This being, by very nature of being TTWNGCBT must be the only being of its kind, that is, unique and 'the highest degree' of existence.
- Anselm finishes his argument by stating: 'To thee alone, therefore, it belongs to exist more truly than all other beings, and hence in a higher degree than all others. For, whatever else exists does not exist so truly, and hence in a less degree it belongs to it to exist.' (P3)

Issues for analysis and evaluation:

Key arguments/debates

The argument is logically sound; however, there is some debate about the validity of the initial premise. Some would say the argument presented by Anselm is simply a matter of faith based upon the true (hidden) premise 'if'.

Some argue that the argument has no basis in, or is so far removed from, reality.

Key questions

Can a deductive argument be appropriate for empirical notions of existence?

$£1 + £1 = £2$; however, is the demonstration that I 'have' £2 a different matter altogether?

Key quotes:

"For, it is one thing for an object to be in the understanding, and another to understand that the object exists." (Anselm P2)

"...there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality." (Anselm P2)

"...it is possible to conceive of a being which cannot be conceived not to exist; and this is greater than one which can be conceived not to exist." (Anselm P3)

"...There is, then, so truly a being than which nothing greater can be conceived to exist, that it cannot even be conceived not to exist..." (Anselm P3)

"...whatever else there is, except thee alone, can be conceived not to exist." (Anselm P3)

Key words:

Deductive

Anselm

non-existence

logical

TTWNGCBT

cannot not

necessary

mind and reality

illogical

premise

mind only

unique