

T H I R T E E N T H E D I T I O N

REASON AND RESPONSIBILITY

Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy

JOEL FEINBERG

Late of University of Arizona

RUSS SHAFER-LANDAU

University of Wisconsin

THOMSON

WADSWORTH

AUSTRALIA • BRAZIL • CANADA • MEXICO • SINGAPORE
SPAIN • UNITED KINGDOM • UNITED STATES

osophy. Students interested in exploring the consequences of such a “naturalistic” materialistic” world view can find articles that address these implications in every of the remaining parts of this book. Those so minded are encouraged to have a look at works in Part 2 (“The Methods of Science”), Part 3 (“The Mind-Body Problem”), Part 4 (“Hard Determinism”), and Part 5 (“Challenges to Morality”).

THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF GOD

The Ontological Argument, from *Proslogion*

ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) was Archbishop of Canterbury.

CHAPTER 2. THAT GOD EXISTS

ord, You who give understanding to me that I may understand, as much as I can, that You exist as we believe You exist, that You are what we believe You are, that You are something greater than anything greater can be thought. Or that a thing of such a nature does not exist. The Fool has said in his heart, there [Ps. 13: 1; 52: 1]: But surely, when the Fool hears what I am speaking about, something-than-which-nothing-greater-ghc’, he understands what he hears, and understands in his mind, even if he does not understand that it actually exists. For if there is a thing for an object to exist in the world, there is another thing to understand that an object exists. Thus, when a painter plans what he is going to execute, he has it in his mind, but he does not yet actually exist because he has not yet been executed. However, when he has actually executed his painting, then he both has it in his mind and exists. That it exists because he has now executed it, and he is forced to agree that it exists because he has now executed it, is absurd. Something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-

be-thought exists in the mind, since he understands this when he hears it, and whatever is understood is in the mind. And surely that-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought cannot exist in the mind alone. For if it exists solely in the mind, it can be thought to exist in reality also, which is greater. If then that-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists in the mind alone, this same that-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought is that-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought. But this is obviously impossible. Therefore there is absolutely no doubt that something-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists both in the mind and in reality.

CHAPTER 3. THAT GOD CANNOT BE THOUGHT NOT TO EXIST

And certainly this being so truly exists that it cannot be even thought not to exist. For something can be thought to exist that cannot be thought not to exist, and this is greater than that which can be thought not to exist. Hence, if that-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought can be thought not to exist, then that-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought is not the same as that-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought, which is absurd. Something-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought

exists so truly then, that it cannot be even thought not to exist.

And You, Lord our God, are this being. You exist so truly, Lord my God, that You cannot be thought not to exist. And this is as it should be, for if some intelligence could think of something better than You, the creature would be above its Creator and would judge its Creator—and that is completely absurd. In fact, everything else there is, except You alone, can be thought of as not existing. You alone, then, of all things most truly exist and therefore of all things possess existence to the highest degree; for anything else does not exist as truly, and so possesses existence to a lesser degree. Why then did ‘the Fool say in his heart, there is no God’ [Ps. 14: 1; 53: 1] when it is so evident to any rational mind that You of all things exist to the highest degree? Why indeed, unless because he was stupid and a fool?

CHAPTER 4. HOW ‘THE FOOL SAID IN HIS HEART’ WHAT CANNOT BE THOUGHT

How indeed has he ‘said in his heart’ what he could not think; or how could he not think what he ‘said in his heart’, since to ‘say in one’s heart’ and to ‘think’ are the same? But if he really (indeed, since he really) both thought because he ‘said in his heart’ and did not ‘say in his heart’ because he could not think, there is not only one sense in which something is ‘said in one’s heart’ or thought. For in one sense a thing is thought when the word signifying it is thought; in another sense when the very object which the thing is understood. In the first sense, then, God can be thought not to exist, but not at all in the second sense. No one, indeed,

understanding what God is can think that God does not exist, even though he may think words in his heart either without any significance or with some peculiar significance. For God is that-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought. Whoever really understands clearly that this same being that not even in thought can it not be thought that God exists, whoever understands that God exists, whoever cannot think of Him as not existing, whoever gives thanks, good Lord, I give thanks, that I believed before that You, since what I believed before that I received as a gift, I now so understand through my own reason, that if I did not want to believe that You existed, I should nevertheless not to *understand* it.

CHAPTER 5. THAT GOD IS WHATEVER IT IS BETTER TO BE THAN NOT TO BE AND THAT EXISTING THROUGH HIM ALONE, HE MAKES ALL OTHER BEINGS FROM NOTHING

What then are You, Lord God, You nothing greater can be thought? You are whatever is better than nothing. You save that supreme being, existing by Yourself alone, who made everything nothing? For whatever is not this that which can be thought of; but that which can be thought of; but be thought about You. What good could be wanting to the supreme good which every good exists? Thus You truthful, happy, and whatever it is better than not to be—for it is better to be than unjust, and happy rather than un-

On Behalf of the Fool

GAUNILO OF MARMOUTIERS

Gaunilo was an eleventh-century Benedictine monk whose fame rests on his critique of Anselm’s ontological argument.

the painter and then in the completed work. And thus it would be scarcely conceivable that, when this object had been spoken of and heard, it could not be thought not to exist in the same way in which God can [be thought] not to exist. For if He cannot, why put forward this whole argument against anyone denying or doubting that there is something of this kind? Finally, that it is such a thing that, as soon as it is thought of, it cannot but be certainly perceived by the mind as indubitably existing, must be proved to me by some indisputable argument and not by that proposed, namely, that it must already be in my mind when I understand what I hear. For this is in my view like [arguing that] any things doubtfully real or even unreal are capable of existing if these things are mentioned by someone whose spoken words I might understand, and, even more, that [they exist] if, though deceived about them as often happens, I should believe them [to exist]—which argument I still do not believe!

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Hence, the example of the painter having the picture he is about to make already in his mind cannot support this argument. For this picture, before it is actually made, is contained in the very art of the painter and such a thing in the art of any artist is nothing but a certain part of his very understanding, since as St Augustine says [*In Iobannem*, tract. 1, n. 16], ‘when the artisan is about actually to make a box he has it beforehand in his art. The box which is actually made is not a living thing, but the box which is in his art is a living thing since the soul of the artist, in which these things exist before their actual realization, is a living thing.’ Now how are these things living in the living soul of the artist unless they are identical with the knowledge or understanding of the soul itself? But, apart from those things which are known to belong to the very nature of the mind itself, in the case of any truth perceived by the mind by being either heard or understood, then it cannot be doubted that this truth is one thing and that the understanding which grasps it is another. Therefore even if it

were true that there was something than which nothing greater could be thought, this thing, heard and understood, would not, however, be the same as the not-yet-made picture is in the mind of the painter.

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To this we may add something that has already been mentioned, namely, that upon hearing it spoken of I can so little think of or entertain in my mind this being (that which is greater than all those others that are able to be thought of, and which it is said can be none other than God Himself) in terms of an object known to me either by species or genus, as I can think of God Himself, whom indeed for this very reason I can even think does not exist. For neither do I know the reality itself, nor can I form an idea from some other things like it since, as you say yourself, it is such that nothing could be like it. For if I heard something said about a man who was completely unknown to me so that I did not even know whether he existed, I could nevertheless think about him in his very reality as a man by means of that specific or generic notion by which I know what a man is or men are. However, it could happen that, because of a falsehood on the part of the speaker, the man I thought of did not actually exist, although I thought of him nevertheless as a truly existing object—not this particular man but any man in general. It is not, then, in the way that I have this unreal thing in thought or in mind that I can have that object in my mind when I hear ‘God’ or ‘something greater than everything’ spoken of. For while I was able to think of the former in terms of a truly existing thing which was known to me, I know nothing at all of the latter save for the verbal formula, and on the basis of this alone one can scarcely or never think of any truth. For when one thinks in this way, one thinks not so much of the word itself, which is indeed a real thing (that is to say, the sound of the letters or syllables), as of the meaning of the word which is heard. However, it [that which is greater than everything] is not thought of in the way of one who knows what is meant by that expression—thought of, that is, in terms of the thing [signified] or as true in

thought alone. It is rather in whom does not really know this of it in terms of an affection of his by hearing the spoken words, to imagine what the words he means. However, it would be a word could ever [attain to] the truth. Therefore, when I hear and understand saying that there is something greater than anything that can be thought of, if it is in this latter sense that it is in my any other sense. So much for the supreme nature exists already in

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That, however, [this nature] reality is demonstrated to me unless it existed, whatever exists be greater than it and consequently be that which is greater than undoubtedly had already been in the mind. To this I reply as if something that cannot even be thought and real sense must be said in mind, then I do not deny that in my mind in the same way. This one cannot in any way exist also in reality, I certainly concede that it actually exists, until to me by an indubitable argument who claims that it actually exists wise it would not be that which everything does not consider whom he is addressing. For I can yet admit this greater [than even any truly existing things; indeed even deny it. And I do not concede in a different way from that—I speak of ‘existence’ here—when to imagine a completely unknown the basis of the spoken word then can it be proved to me on which is greater than everything reality (because it is evident that than all others) if I keep on doubting that this is evident and that this greater [than everything]

thought, not even in the sense in doubtfully real and unreal things first of all be proved to me then me greater than everything truly it is somewhere, and then only will it is greater than everything make t also subsists in itself.

they say that there is in the ocean an island which, because of the rather the impossibility) of finding does not exist, some have called the . . . And the story goes that it is all manner of priceless riches and abundance, much more even than ables, and, having no owner or inhabitior everywhere in abundance of those other lands that men inhabit. One tell me that it is like this, I shall stand what is said, since nothing is ut it. But if he should then go on ough it were a logical consequence cannot any more doubt that this is more excellent than all other exists somewhere in reality than you at it is in your mind; and since it llent to exist not only in the mind also in reality, therefore it must at it exists. For if it did not exist, and existing in reality would be nt than it, and so this island, already y you to be more excellent than not be more excellent. If, I say, shes thus to persuade me that this exists beyond all doubt, I should k that he was joking, or d it hard to decide which of us I dge the bigger fool—I, if I agreed or he, if he thought that he had xistence of this island with any cer- s he had first convinced me that its ace exists in my mind precisely as a

thing existing truly and indubitably and not just as something unreal or doubtfully real.

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Thus first of all might the Fool reply to objections. And if then someone should assert that this greater [than everything] is such that it cannot be thought not to exist (again without any other proof than that otherwise it would not be greater than everything), then he could make this same reply and say: When have I said that there truly existed some being that is 'greater than everything', such that from this it could be proved to me that this same being really existed to such a degree that it could not be thought not to exist? That is why it must first be conclusively proved by argument that there is some higher nature, namely that which is greater and better than all the things that are, so that from this we can also infer everything else which necessarily cannot be wanting to what is greater and better than everything. When, however, it is said that this supreme being cannot be *thought* not to exist, it would perhaps be better to say that it cannot be *understood* not to exist nor even to be able not to exist. For, strictly speaking, unreal things cannot be *understood*, though certainly they can be *thought* of in the same way as the Fool *thought* that God does not exist. I know with complete certainty that I exist, but I also know at the same time nevertheless that I can not-exist. And I *understand* without any doubt that that which exists to the highest degree, namely God, both exists and cannot not exist. I do not know, however, whether I can *think* of myself as not existing while I know with absolute certainty that I do exist; but if I can, why cannot [I do the same] with regard to anything else I know with the same certainty? If however I cannot, this will not be the distinguishing characteristic of God [namely, to be such that He cannot be thought not to exist].

The Ontological Argument

WILLIAM L. ROWE

William L. Rowe teaches philosophy at Purdue University. He is a distinguished authority on the philosophy of religion.

Arguments for the existence of God are commonly divided into a posteriori and a priori arguments. An a posteriori argument depends on a principle or premise that can be known only by means of our experience of the world. An a priori argument, on the other hand, purports to rest on principles which can be known independently of our experience of the world, just by reflecting on and understanding them. Of the three major arguments for the existence of God—the Cosmological, Teleological, and Ontological—only the last is entirely a priori. In the Cosmological argument one starts from some simple fact about the world, such as the fact that it contains things which are caused to exist by other things. In the Teleological argument a somewhat more complicated fact about the world serves as a starting point: the fact that the world exhibits order and design. In the Ontological argument, however, one begins simply with a concept of God.

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It is perhaps best to think of the Ontological argument as a family of arguments, each member of which begins with a concept of God, and by appealing only to a priori principles, endeavors to establish that God actually exists. Within this family of arguments the most important historically is the argument set forth by Anselm in the second chapter of his *Proslogium* (A Discourse).¹ Indeed, the Ontological argument begins with chapter II of Anselm's *Proslogium*. In an earlier work, *Monologium* (A Soliloquy), Anselm had endeavored to establish the existence and nature

of God by weaving together several the Cosmological argument. In the *Proslogium* Anselm remarks that after tion of *Monologium* he began to search for a single argument which alone would establish existence and nature of God. After many years but unsuccessful effort, he reported to have sought to put the project out of his mind in order to turn to more fruitful tasks. However, continued to haunt him until the proof he had so strenuously sought to clear to his mind. Anselm sets forth the in the second chapter of *Proslogium*.

Before discussing Anselm's argument by-step fashion, there are certain considerations which will help us understand some of the ideas of the argument. Suppose we draw a line in our imagination and agree that the side of our line are all the things which while on the right side of the line things which don't exist. We might to make a list of some of the things on the sides of our imaginary line, as follows:

<i>Things Which Exist</i>	<i>Things Which Don't Exist</i>
The Empire State Building	The Fountain Unicorns
Dogs	The Abominable Snowman
The planet Mars	

Now each of the things (or sorts of things) thus far has (have) the following feature: logically might have been on the other