

Anselm of canterbury

Philosophy



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Anselm of Canterbury: The Ontological Argument and the Perfect God.

Anselm's Ontological Argument in the "Proslogion," attempting to prove the existence of God, hinges on his definition of God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought of" (Anselm, 359). This definition of God as the 'greatest' mandates a conception of God as Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent: the Perfect God. Anselm conceives of God as perfect; if this conception is rejected, Anselm's argument falls apart.

Anselm's argument is founded on the assumption that God exists. He makes this assumption on the basis of the argument that God's non-existence is impossible. God "cannot be even thought of as not existing" (Anselm, 360). Having made the existence of God a given, Anselm defines God as the greatest thing that can be thought of. God is superlative, because the human mind, created by God, cannot conceive of anything greater than its creator, who exists eternally throughout the ages. The rest of his argument proceeds from this definition.

If the perfection of God is not accepted, Anselm's argument does not hold. God exists in understanding, because the concept of God as "something than which nothing greater than be thought of" can be understood.

Something which exists in reality is greater than something which exists only in understanding. If God exists only in understanding, he cannot be the greatest. Since Anselm has established that God is the greatest, and nothing can be greater than God, it follows that God must exist in reality. Therefore, Anselm's conception of God as the greatest, as Perfect, is the very foundation of his argument for God's existence. If Anselm's belief in the 'Perfect God' is discarded, his 'proof' of God's existence must be discarded along with it.

Works Cited.

Anselm of Canterbury. “ Proslogion.” Ed. George Cronk. 1996. 359-360. Print.