

Rational and real god essay

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



In the history of human civilization, there were numerous questions which philosophers and scientists could not answer or even explain. There were also issues which both philosophers and scientists interpreted in different and usually opposing ways. The most common example of contradiction between science and philosophy is the existence of God. While philosophers suggested various rational and reasonable intellectual reasons for the existence of God, scientists were more eager to unravel mysteries of human life, understand the essence or causality of human existence and its material origins. In other words, faith in God and cognition of the world were separated. In science, the unity of God and scientific research was embodied in the most remarkable mind of 20th century – Albert Einstein, who believed that, in the end, the reason and causality of everything in the existing world was God (Asiedu 534). In philosophy, this issue is connected to the ontological argument as a starting point for a new discussion of the topic in a new, constructive manner, combining faith in God with further search for answers. The developer of ontological argument was Anselm of Canterbury, a brilliant mind of 11th century. The aim of the present paper is to explain the meaning of his conclusion that “ God cannot be thought not to exist” and critically assess this statement (Davies & Evans 112). In this context, the essence of his argumentations is outlined and then critically analyzed from logical and philosophic perspectives supported by some prominent thinkers. The central idea of Anselm’s searching of God is based on rational epistemological tradition. In this sense, Anselm was trying not only to emphasize that God should exist but also to connect faith, scientific desire of cognitive research and comprehension of the world. In this context, he

suggested that human perception and realization of God could not be done empirically and that materialization of God could be explained in rational/mental terms, without any need of practical proof (Souther 56). In this context, his arguments are based on qualitative properties of the abstract terms of “goodness” and “justice” through their embodiment as characteristics of more general and substantial essences, like “supreme goodness” or “supreme justice” (Davies & Evans 118). In his perception, an individual was capable of realizing and accepting qualities of objects in terms of derived characteristics of various degrees, but not in terms of the essential one. According to Anselm, the aim of scientific and epistemological research was in comprehension of the essential essence (God) and the ways He was embodied in the real world (Souther 67).

Although mentioned above rational of Anselm’s conclusion might seem just and logical, the main argument and subsequent criticism are caused by the way he came to that conclusion. The weak part of his logic is supposition that all properties of an object or event are derived from one source, meaning that a certain thing might be good through something else (Asiedu 538). In this context, Anselm suggested that things could not be good through themselves, so they were good through other things. Things which were good through other things were considered to be of lower level and unequal to the initial, all-combining goodness or “supreme goodness” (Schufreider 462). Although this logical chain of arguments might seem rational, its essence is the main weakness of Anselm’s statement. By applying inductive logic, meaning that he came from totality of different properties to one source of them, Anselm failed to explain how an individual

could compare properties of things in their correspondence to the initial, supreme source, since an individual could not entirely realize the essence of that source (supreme goodness); thus, he could not evaluate degrees of goodness of an object or event (Sweney 19). In other words, it was unclear how without knowing supreme essence one could realize the quality of an object in terms of that essence.

The main argumentation derived from degrees of things' properties is that "things are not all of equal dignity; rather, some of them are on different and unequal levels" (Davies & Evans, 129). In this context, Anselm was trying to prove that since objects and individuals were not equal in their characterization and might be in the constant process of development and self-improvement; than there was no limit for the improvement, except for the universal one, the one human being did not realize yet (Souther 32).

Again Anselm's rational explanation is very logical and not exhaustive from the cognitive perspective. The thing is that the abstraction of property nature of "goodness" is dim in Anselm's justifications. He compares entirely opposite objects as examples of inequality, but he forgets to outline the comparative apparatus of his justifications (Schufreider 465). In this context, he fails to outline the criteria of "goodness"; who is to judge what is good and what is wrong; whether Christian moral should be a cornerstone of goodness. In any case, good and evil dichotomy is very subjective matter and it is not even well distinguished in the Bible (Souther 71). In this context is meant that an individual might have his own perception of good and evil, he might judge the world from his own perspective, what was good for Anselm was not the same for kings William and Henry I; thus, who was closer

to the divine goodness of God remained an arguable issue (Asiedu 540).

Thus, the fact that Anselm did not take into account human subjectivity and difference in perception of reality could be viewed as weaknesses of his rational.

Concerning the implications of his statement on the comprehension of the reality, from the scientific point of view, Anselm was closer to justification of the world cognition rather than its rejection (Davies & Evans, 109). In this sense, he considered that, although God existed mainly because he should have existed, humanity should have not stopped on the point of blind faith, but was suggested to evolve further in cognition of the reality and God's embodiment in it (Schufreider 467). Subsequently, Anselm believed that through comprehension of natural phenomena and improvement of human knowledge about surrounding environment (development of science), humanity would be able to find God in the real world and not only in its psychological and rational perception (Sweney 21). Although this idea contributed to the development of human self-perception, it was also limiting the process from the very beginning.

The main limitations of cognitive process was that having a ready-made answer of God as the main embodiment of everything, Anselm did not leave much space for creativity and doubt, which were essential for any kind of scientific and rational search (Asiedu 543). In fact, even his inductive logic was not traditional in its nature and structure. Unlike most of logical conclusions, which originated from doubt and challenging of the initial statement, Anselm based his argument on faith rather than a classic reasoning (Sweney 25). By doing this, his logic was entirely specific and

initially insufficient. If some statement could not be doubted and challenged, how it was supposed to be proved and rationally justified? Anselm's answer was faith. Except for limiting cognition and world perception through a rejection of doubt, Anselm also did not care much about final conclusions of real scientific or philosophic findings (Sweney 27). Since he knew that the essence of things was God, further searches were conducted as process of serving God and strengthening one's faith, rather than for the sake of a final result and comprehension of the world itself (Souther 72). Subsequently, the true nature of the world could not be understood by a believer, since his rational for research was limited by God as the final and definite answer (Schufreider 470).

In the context of the last statement, another essential critical point of Anselm's rational was suggested by philosopher Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, who considered that human being could not practically conceive God. This statement opposed Anselm's crucial point of philosophy that God was conceivable and could have been comprehensible by humanity (Souther 33). In this context, difference in arguments was not that Anselm did not explain how an individual might understand God (through faith, self-improvement and cognition of God's embodiment in the real world) but the inconsistency between his rational theory and its failure to be implemented in practice (Sweney 29). In this context, it was difficult to imagine an individual who would be practically capable of comprehending God in the real world. From the rational perspective, the problem is not the fact that it is impossible for an individual to conceive God in the reality of the material world, but in the fact that Anselm did not suggest how exactly it should be achieved

(Schufreider 468). In other words, his argumentations were entirely theoretical and were inapplicable in reality.

Unlike many critics of Anselm, Kant was not referring only to one aspect of Anselm's argumentations – either logical part or its practical embodiment, he refuted both. In this context, Kant suggested that the main problem of Anselm's logic was a classic logical mistake known as substitution of notions (Souther 45). He argued that the meaning of the term “existence” was substituted by the meaning of the term “being”, which could have been considered as a predicate and have subsequent logical consequences for the subject's characteristics, meaning cognition and realization of God (Sweney 24). Instead, Kant argued that Anselm's logic of explaining God's existence had nothing to do with His cognition and explanation of His practical nature (Schufreider 464). Kant suggested that, in order for Anselm's logic to make sense, it should either show empirical evidences of God's existence or emphasize strict definitions of all terms applied in his logical framework (Asiedu 534).

Another critical point of Anselm's argument is that he could not emphasize the cause-effect relationship between human searches of God, faith and reason for both. In this context is meant that, although Anselm outlined the fact that God was the reason of everything and an embodiment of the universal truth, he failed to outline the meaning of truth searching and comprehension of God (Sweney 29). In other words, he did not justify exactly why an individual would want to realize God in the real world. In this framework, it was unclear did an individual try to justify its searches by the existence of the intellectual perception of God (apparently the same as

faith), or by weak faith which needed practical proof (Souther 48). In other words, it was unclear how far an individual was allowed to doubt (if allowed at all) God's embodiment in the real world, while he was trying to prove it (Asiedu 531).

Overall, from all mentioned above, it becomes clear that Anselm's argumentation of God's existence, irrespective of its connection with the real process of cognitive searches, was entirely theoretical. The main challenges for this concept were not only a lack of practical evidences, and methodology of this cognitive search's implementation. They included also inconsistency of initial logical justification based not on traditional doubt but on faith, as an essence of reasoning. Other crucial minuses of the concept are in generalization of notions, substitution of different terms and final abstraction from reality. On the other hand, taking into consideration the time, when Anselm lived, his concept was incredibly progressive, because it rejected the supremacy of "blind faith" and suggested the idea of "conscious faith", which was looking for the new dimensions of God's embodiment. In this context, Anselm's views can be seen as similar to Einstein's, who was not proving God's existence or refuting it. Einstein just had faith in God and believed that he was unraveling His laws through the scientific research. In the end, the notions of "God" and "knowledge" remain the same, only their usage and interpretations change together with human development.

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