



Essential Philosophy with Dr. David Schenk

Lesson 4: Three Examples of Faulty Reasoning

Outline:

Three views that include *faulty reasoning*:

- Cultural Relativism
- Psychological Egoism
- Skepticism About Truth

What do these views require in order for someone to endorse them?

- They require an emphasis on intellectual honesty. Someone must already believe that *truth itself* is intrinsically important, or they would have no reason to reject or endorse these views.
- They require defenders who are convinced they know the actual, objective truth of the matter, which brings up the fact objective truth must then exist.

Symbols used on the blackboard (4:00)

- These symbols should remind you of geometric proofs.
- \supset = the last step in an argument; the conclusion
- Numbers above the line are the premises, or what is taken as being a given
- \square = a logician's symbol for "therefore"
- An equal (=) sign with a subscript "df" means "is defined as"

Ontological Argument (5:40)

- Introduction
 - Saint Anselm of Canterbury developed the Ontological Argument.
 - There are 2 versions of this argument that Dr. Schenk talks about in this lecture series. The 1st version of this argument is Anselm's classic version; the 2nd version of the argument is a modern version developed by Alvin Plantinga.
- Anselm's Concept of God used in his 1st Ontological Argument (7:00)
 - When we say the word God, what do we mean?
 - Most Judeo-Christian and Muslim traditions agree with the following attributes of God:



Attribute	Meaning of Attribute	Description
Omnipotent	All-powerful	God is all-powerful, but cannot do self-contradictory things, fail, or make a mistake. Humans can make mistakes because they are imperfect, but God is perfect and cannot.
Omniscient	All-knowing	If there is something capable of being known, God already knows it.
Omnibenevolent	Infinitely good and loving	This trait makes God the sort of being who is worthy of worship. While omnipotence or omniscience might inspire fear, omnibenevolence inspires worship.
Person	Personhood, not a thing or force	God is a pure spirit and pure mind. He is a someone, not a something.
Omnipresent	Present everywhere	God is not everything, but he is present everywhere.

- According to Anselm, God is infinitely knowledgeable, infinitely good, infinitely powerful and infinitely perfect. In essence, *God is a being of which none greater can be conceived.*
- Anselm never uses the term God. This is key because, even if you never argue for a being labeled “God,” you could still argue for *a being greater than which none can be conceived.*
- Anselm builds an argument for the existence of God based on *fundamental concepts* alone, rather than observational evidence.

Ontological Argument #1 (See blackboard at 27:20)**Anselm's 1st Ontological Argument**

- (1) God = df. That being than which none greater can be conceived.
- (2) God exists in the understanding.
- (3) Existing in reality as well as in the understanding is greater than existing just in the understanding alone.

- (4) ∴, Since the very essence of God is to be infinitely great, he must exist both in reality and in the understanding.
- > (5) ∴, God exists.

- Notes on the Premises for this Argument
 - Premise (2):
 - The concept of an unconditional being is logically self-consistent.
 - The *Medieval “understanding” or imagination* was a domain in which some things had more “being” than other things; some things had greater kick or were capable of doing more. (See the Hierarchy of Being on next page)
 - Premise (3):
 - Most modern and contemporary critics make their attack against Premise (3).
 - Premise (3) argues that existing in reality is greater than existing only in the imagination or understanding. For example, would you rather have a car that exists in your imagination, or a car that is sitting in your driveway?
 - Premises (4-5):
 - In a similar way, if God is greater than anything else, he would be the thing that actually exists in reality, not just the understanding. Therefore, God must exist since he is greater than anything else.
- Medieval Understanding of Perfection
 - While we use “perfection” as an adjective (the perfect person), Medievals used “perfection” as a noun.
 - Perfection for Medievals was *any trait the possession of which improved a thing's allotment in life*.
 - Perfection existed in varying degrees, with some things having more “perfection” than others.
 - For example, consider the trait of “sight.” You can have sight in varying degrees of perfection, with some having better sight than others.
 - For Anselm, existence is a perfection best illustrated by the Hierarchy of Being.



Hierarchy of Being (or Perfection) (See new blackboard at 39:00)

- The Hierarchy of Being is in defense of Premise (3) of Anselm's Ontological Argument.
- In the Hierarchy of Being, existence comes in degrees—some have more of it and some less.

Hierarchy of Being	Description
God	Possesses existence infinitely; highest level of self-containing unity
Angels	Pure spirits and pure minds; they are incapable of decomposition and death
People	Persons can do everything animals can do, but more, such as reasoning, self-reflection, existential crises
Animals	Can do all things that plants can do, but more, such as perceiving their physical environments
Plants	They have an innate capacity to sustain themselves, but they cannot get up and leave like animals
Inanimate things	They are not living and cannot reproduce, but like a podium or table, they take effort to alter or change them
Piles of stuff	They have a hard time maintaining their nature, like a pile of leaves that can easily be disturbed by the wind

The 21st Century Hierarchy of Being (50:00)

- As Dr. Schenk shares, we have a modernized Hierarchy of Being that we carry in our minds. Despite how we think of existence as an on/off switch—you either exist or you do not—we still maintain a Hierarchy of Being today.
 - Consider Dr. Schenk's very personal example included in this lecture of his cat Tray's death and his father's death. When Tray died, Dr. Schenk was sad, but he did not go to pieces. When his father died, however, Dr. Schenk was inconsolable. Suppose, however, his reactions had been reversed, and he had mourned Tray's death far greater than his own father's passing. That would be ludicrous! Why? Because in the 21st century we still consider a person as having *something more there*. The world suffers a greater loss when a person dies than when an animal dies.