



Essential Philosophy with Dr. David Schenk

Lesson 6: Anselm's Ontological Argument for the Existence of

Outline:

Notes:

- This lecture is a continuation of Lesson 5's Objections to Anselm's Ontological Argument.
- Make sure to take a look at the Blackboard images in the lecture video!
- Both Russell and Kant's objections to the Ontological Arg. have an overlap—existence is not a perfection because it is not a property at all.
- For this lecture, you might wish to read Bertrand Russell's "On Denoting," which is a defining paper for the field of analytic philosophy (available on JSTOR).

Introduction to Russell's Objection

- Definition vs. Instantiation for Russell
 - **Instantiation** is the world having instances of some defined concept in it.
 - For example, Dr. Schenk played Dungeons & Dragons as a young man. The Monster Manual provides a **definition** of a Unicorn (white hair, gold horn, no wings), but no amount of information provided by a definition of what Unicorns look like can help you determine whether Unicorns actually exist—for that, you must go into the world and look!
 - **Exist-icorn** example (see Blackboard at 9:00)
 - A Dungeon Master might create a monster called an Exist-icorn. The only difference between a Unicorn and an Exist-icorn is the added property of "existence." By adding "existence" to a Unicorn, has Dr. Schenk given you any evidence to support the proposition that Exist-icorns can be found in the world? No! **Definitions** fail to prove if something exists.
 - Similarly, for Russell, treating "existence" as a perfection also fails, as Anselm does. It provides no evidence that the thing actually exists.
 - A key point of Russell to remember is that **you can't define something into existence**.
- How, then, can you defend Anselm against Kant and Russell?



- *Against Russell and Kant*, you must defend that existence is a possessable trait or property; also, you must defend that perfection, when possessed, makes a thing greater.

2nd Version of Anselm's Ontological Argument (see Blackboard at 17:37) *Anselm's 2nd Ont. Arg. modernized by Alvin Plantinga

- Introduction to prepare you for the 2nd Ont. Arg.
 - Alvin Plantinga, a Calvinist philosopher, modernized Anselm's 2nd Ontological Argument with *modal logic* in the 1960s and 70s.
 - *Modal logic* - Modes of being
 - *Necessary beings* are things that exist and, by their natures, are guaranteed to exist.
 - For example, " $2 + 2 = 4$ " is a mathematical truth, which is true no matter what you do.
 - Necessary beings have no way of failing to exist under any circumstances.
 - For example, the value behind the number 2 is a necessary being—its value is the same in Arabic, Roman, or binary numbers.
 - *Contingent beings* are things that exist but do not have to.
 - For example, "David Schenk exists," easily could have been false. His existence is, as Dr. Schenk shares (21:25), contingent on events that took place in 1968—events that easily could have been different.
 - Humans are contingent beings—we all exist, but not one of us has to.
 - *Possible worlds* (29:53)—In logic (not sci-fi or literary genres), possible worlds are alternative, self-consistent constructible scenarios for how the world could have gone differently.
 - For example, Dr. Schenk wore a white shirt to the office in the real world, but he could have worn a light-blue shirt in a possible world called W_1 .
 - *Contingent beings & Possible worlds*—A contingent being is a being that does exist in the actual world, but fails to exist in some other possible worlds.
 - An actual world is called *alpha*, symbolized with the symbol α .
 - *Necessary beings & Possible worlds*—A necessary being is a being that does exist in all possible worlds (both in α and any other constructible, self-consistent scenarios).