



## Essential Philosophy with Dr. David Schenk

### Lesson 7: Anselm's Ontological Argument Continued

#### Outline:

##### Review of Lecture 7

- The basic categories that Alvin Plantinga uses in the 2nd Ontological Argument are:
  - *Possible worlds* - Alternative, self-consistent constructible scenarios for how the world could have gone differently
  - *Necessary beings* - Exist in Alpha but also all possible worlds
  - *Contingent beings* - Exist in Alpha but not all possible worlds

##### 2nd Ontological Argument

#### Alvin Plantinga's Version of the Ontological Argument

- (1) If God exists, then God is a necessary being, not a contingent one.
- (2) There is some "possible world"  $W_1$  in which God exists.
- (3) But then in  $W_1$  God exists as a necessary being.
- (4) But then in  $W_1$  we find God existing in all possible worlds (including  $\alpha$ ).
- (5) But then there is no possible world in which God fails to exist (including  $\alpha$ ).
- > (6)  $\therefore$ , God exists.

- Notes
  - For Premise (1), remember that God is infinitely or "maximally great," and must therefore be necessary.
  - In Premise (2), Plantinga uses assumptions that atheists themselves are willing to accept. Even a hard-nosed atheist could imagine *a possible world ( $W_1$ ) in which God exists*, because it isn't contradictory like a round square.
  - For Premises (4) and (5), remember that if God exists in Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and he is a necessary being, then he exists in all worlds, so (6)...God exists.
  - Plantinga isn't looking to prove the existence of God. *He is trying to prove the rationality or plausibility of theism*. This is helpful as atheists might be convinced that theism is irrational. Plantinga wants to turn



this around and make atheists uncomfortable with a plausible argument for theism. He wants to show that theism is as well-founded as atheism.

David Hume's Argument against Necessary Beings (See Blackboard at 9:15)

### David Hume's Argument Against Necessary Beings

- (1) If God exists, then God is a necessary being, not a contingent one.
- (2) There is some "possible world"  $W_2$  in which God does not exist.
- (3) But then in  $W_2$  God is not a necessary being.
- (4) But then in  $W_2$  we find God failing to exist in all possible worlds (maybe even in  $\alpha$ ).
- (5) But then there is no possible world in which God exists as a necessary being.
- > (6)  $\therefore$ , God does not exist.

- Notes
  - David Hume believed that *everything that exists is contingent*. Therefore, there are no necessary beings. Because God is a necessary being, he must not exist.
  - Plantinga uses David Hume's atheistic argument to show that both a theistic argument and an atheistic argument are rational.
  - **Mindset behind Premise (2):** If you are a monotheist, have you ever had doubts that what you believe about God is a lie? In that moment, you imagined a self-consistent, possible world in which God does not exist.
  - Premise (3) seals the deal. Because God fails to exist in  $W_2$ , it means that God is not a necessary being. This contradicts Premise (1), so God must not exist.
- What is Plantinga's motive?
  - Plantinga uses David Hume's reconstructed argument to give both sides—both are equally defensible but lead to different conclusions, yet only one can be right. Rather than argue directly for God's existence, he plants seeds that each side is probable. This definitely angers atheists!
- Why is Plantinga's argument important?
  - While Bertrand Russell's objection to St. Anselm originally frustrated pro-Anselmians, Plantinga's version of St. Anselm's Ontological Argument turned the tables. Because of Plantinga, theists and atheists are at a draw.



- The 2nd Ontological Argument is important because it offers a side of the argument that says, “Stop believing the myth that all arguments for God’s existence have been refuted.”