

# พิสูจน์ถึงการณ์มีอยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้า ของอัลแซมล์กับความนิยมในปัจจุบัน

## Anselm's ontological argument and its relevance.

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## บทคัดย่อ

หนึ่งในการพิสูจน์การมีอยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้าที่ได้รับความสนใจคือพิสูจน์จากการณ์มีอยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้า ซึ่งยังคงได้รับความสนใจจนถึงทุกวันนี้ ผู้เขียนได้แบ่งส่วนต่างๆ ของบทความออกเป็น 7 ส่วน 1. หลักคิดที่ว่าไปของการพิสูจน์ภาระการณ์มีอยู่ 2. ประวัติย่อๆ ของอัลแซล์ม 3. เปื้องหลังความคิดของอัลแซล์มในการพิสูจน์การมีอยู่ 4. เหตุผลที่อัลแซล์มโต้แย้งว่า การไม่มีอยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้านั้น เป็นไปไม่ได้ 5. คำอธิบายการพิสูจน์ภาระการณ์มีอยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้า 6. Plantinga ได้พัฒนาความคิดการพิสูจน์การมีอยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้าของอัลแซล์ม และ 7. สรุป

## คำสำคัญ:

ข้อพิสูจน์ทางภาระของอัลแซล์ม  
การมีอยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้า  
แพลนทิงก้า

**Abstract**

One of the interesting proofs offered for the existence of God is what is known as the ontological argument.<sup>1</sup> It still has some relevance for today, and it has modern versions. I divide this article into seven parts. In the introduction, I give a general idea of why the ontological argument is still interesting. Secondly, I summarize St. Anselm's life for those who do not know him. In the third part, I introduce the background to St. Anselm's argument. Fourthly I explain why St. Anselm argues that God cannot be thought not to exist. In the fifth part, I explain St. Anselm's argument in more detail. Sixthly I pick up Alvin Plantinga's presentday version of the ontological argument and show how he develops it. The seventh part is the conclusion.

**Keywords:** St. Anselm's Ontological argument  
Existence of God  
Plantinga

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<sup>1</sup> Ontology, understood as a branch of metaphysics, is the science of being in general, embracing such issues as the nature of existence and the categorical structure of reality take from [Ted Honderich, the oxford companion to Philosophy, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, p.634]

## 1. Introduction

Some philosophers think that the term ontological argument originally came from Immanuel Kant, but there is no general agreement about this assertion. Those who reject it say that St. Anselm was the first to use the terms in his efforts to demonstrate the existence of God as far back as the eleventh century.

What is the aim of the ontological argument? Brian Davies explains:

“Common to all ontological arguments is the suggestion that once we understand what this amounts to, we will see that God exists. And not only that. Ontological arguments maintain that God cannot possibly fail to exist, or that there is some intrinsic absurdity in denying God’s existence. To put things another way, they hold that

God is a necessary being. Once we understand what the word “triangle” means, we can see, straight off, that ‘there are four-sided triangles’ cannot possibly be true (is necessarily false). According to ontological arguments once we take note of the meaning of the word ‘God’, we can see (maybe not straight off but with a little thought) that ‘God does not exist’ also cannot possibly be true (is necessarily false)”<sup>2</sup>

Brian Davies says that “ontological arguments maintain that God cannot possibly fail to exist, or that there is some intrinsic absurdity in denying God’s existence.”<sup>3</sup> For the defenders of the ontological argument, God is a necessary being, and this can be demonstrated by logic. Today it is common to find people who say that

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Davies, *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.304.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 304.

probably 'God' is just a proposition in which people use in order to be able to deal with concepts, but there is no substance behind this word – no reality. But today, we also find people who affirm the existence of God and offer reasons why God has to exist. For them, it can be equally absurd to say God does not exist. We will start with the man whose name is most associated with this argument.

## 2. Anselm's life

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy gives this introduction to St. Anselm:

"Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). Benedictine monk, second Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, and philosophical theologian dubbed 'the father of Scholasticism'. Anselm is justly famous for his distinctive method ('faith seeking under-

standing'), his ontological argument (s), and his classic articulation of the satisfaction theory of the atonement. Better suited to philosophy and contemplation than to politics, Anselm possessed a subtlety and originality that rank him among the most penetrating medieval thinkers (along with Augustine, Aquinas, Duns Scotus and William of Ockham) and explain the perennial fascination with his ideas"<sup>4</sup>

Anselm was an Italian, who, in 1059, at the age of 26, arrived at the reforming abbey of Bec in Normandy and asked to be admitted in order to study as a lay student. He later became a monk and when Lanfranc, the monk who headed the reform movement, was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury,

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<sup>4</sup> Ted Honderich, the Oxford Companion to Philosophy, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, p.37.

bury in England, the monks chose Anselm as abbot. He had already won their admiration for his intelligence both as a theologian and as philosopher. In 1075 Anselm wrote a book called Monologion. He explained in his introduction that the monks had asked him to write down the lectures he had given them. He starts with a prayer:

“I do not aim Lord to penetrate your profundity, because I know my intellect is no match for it; but I want to understand in some small measure the truth of yours that my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe; but I believe that I may understand. For I believe this too, that unless I believe, I shall not understand. (Isaiah 7:9)”<sup>5</sup>

The Monologion was written for educated monks. Anselm is a man of faith who is trying to understand better what he believes. He says that the monks had asked him to write his book using reason alone; so he sets out to demonstrate the reasonableness of some of the truths that Christians believe by faith. Because of the request of the monks, he rarely uses arguments from scripture or church authority. He believes that he can show the truth of many Christian doctrines by using reason alone; truths such as the existence of God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, etc. When he sent the book to Lanfranc for his approval, Lanfranc didn’t like it very much. ‘Where are the quotes from Scripture and St. Augustine?’ he asks. However, Anselm made no changes to the book. He continued to believe in the usefulness of reason alone.

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Kenny, Medieval Philosophy. P.41.

Anselm believed that the truths of the Christian faith must be reasonable because they come from God, the Supreme Reason. He also believed that although there are truths that we already accept because of our faith, we should use our reason to understand them better. Suppose someone asks: “What does Creation from nothing mean?” Anselm is a careful analyst of language. What does the word ‘nothing’ mean? Is it a thing or ‘no thing’? Or perhaps does it mean non-existence?” Reason and philosophy can give us answers, but the person who uses them must develop three qualities:

- i) Humility to save one from arrogance
- ii) Obedience to Scripture and Church teaching
- iii) Spiritual discipline to stop us from going astray.

### 3. Anselm's Ontological Argument

Anselm is best remembered for what is called ‘the ontological argument.’ He develops this in a second

book called the Proslogion. The monks of the monastery have now asked him to try to prove that God exists by using arguments from reason alone. Again, he does not in his arguments use supporting quotes from Scripture or authority. It is a rational argument – developed inside his mind with no use of outside evidence. Many great philosophers have commented on this argument. People feel that there is some fault in the argument, and still, it is difficult to explain why this is so.

To appreciate the argument, we must notice a distinction he makes between two ways in which we can understand what it means to exist or to be. First, there is mental existence – things that exist in the mind. For example I could think about the most wonderful new digital program that makes it very easy to learn a new language. I do not have it, but I have a clear picture of it in my mind; and perhaps a desire to have it. What could be better than that? Well, it would be much better if a brilliant scientist friend gave

me a present for this new program and I am now using it to learn new languages. Now it exists in reality. The reality is much better than the ‘dream language program’ I have been thinking about. If you remember that difference, it may help you understand Anselm’s proof for God’s existence.

He takes as his starting point the line from Psalm 14; ‘The fool says in his heart there is no God’. He wants to show that the fool is wrong. By pure logic, he will prove that there is a God.

“Thus, even the fool is convinced that something than which nothing greater can be conceived is in the understanding, since when he hear this, he understands it; and whatever is understood is in the understanding. And certainly, that than which a greater cannot be conceived cannot be in the understanding alone. For if it is even in the understanding alone, it can also be conceived to exist

in reality which is greater. Thus, if that than which a greater cannot be conceived is in the understanding alone, then that than which a greater cannot be conceived is itself that than which a greater can be conceived. But surely this cannot be. Thus, without a doubt, something than which a greater cannot be conceived exists, both in the understanding and in reality”<sup>6</sup>

In summary, St. Anselm claims to derive the existence of God from the concept of a being than which no greater can be conceived. St. Anselm reasoned that, if such a being fails to exist, then a greater being—namely, a being than which no greater can be conceived, and which exists—can be conceived. But this would be absurd: nothing can be greater than a being than which no greater can be conceived. So, a being than which no greater can be conceived—i.e., God—must exist.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ontological-arguments/>

#### 4. Anselm argues that God cannot be thought not to exist

##### 4.1 That God truly exists

Brian Davies, in his consideration of the ontological argument writes:

“Certainly, this being so truly exists that it cannot be even thought not to exist. For something can be thought to exist that cannot be thought not to exist, and this is greater than that which can be thought not to exist. Hence, if that –than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought can be thought not to exist, then that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought, which is absurd. Something-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists so truly then, that it cannot be even thought not to exist”<sup>7</sup>

Etienne Gilson basically agrees with this idea of Anselm that it is impossible for someone to say that there is no God because ‘God exists’ is self-evident; it is not possible to say ‘God doesn’t exist’ and God exists at the same time. Anselm goes on to draw out other conclusions from his proof – that God is omnipotent, omniscient, etc. It is true that God may ‘not exist’ in the mind or in the practice of any individual human being – the person ignores this fact – but, for Anselm, it is logically impossible to say that God does not exist.

#### 5. Explanation of the argument of St. Anselm

It is very important to notice at the beginning how Anselm defines the meaning of ‘God.’ He says, ‘God

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<sup>7</sup> Brian Davies, *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.311-312

is a being than which no greater can be thought (or conceived).” Humans can possess a concept of God. It is possible for people to have in their minds an idea of God as the greatest being imaginable. Can anything be greater than this concept? Yes, a God that is not only in my mind but also really exists in a real-world outside my mind is greater.

So, the greatest being that we can possibly think of **must exist not only in my mind but also in reality.**

If it only existed in the mind – it is not the greatest. Why? Because a being that existed in the mind and in reality, would be greater. Therefore, God must exist (in reality). Anselm believed he had given a simple and logical answer to the fool. He can say to him, “you are mistaken, God does exist”.

### 5.1 Objections to Anselm’ Argument

From very early on, some people who studied Anselm’s argument thought there was

something not right with it. The first disagreement came from one of his own monks, Gaunilo. He objected: If someone tells me about a Lost Island, which is the most perfect Island that anyone can think of do I have to believe it also exists? It wouldn’t be the most perfect Island if it only existed in someone’s imagination?

Gaunilo had two basic disagreements with the argument. You cannot have ‘the most’ of some things. For example, you cannot say ‘I am now thinking of the biggest possible number’ Why? My friend can say, “I am thinking of that same number +1, so your number is not the biggest.” Gaunilo also said that since we don’t know anything about God, we cannot think of ‘the greatest possible being’.

The answer of St. Anselm is that the comparison between the idea of a Perfect Island and of a perfect being, a greater of which cannot be thought, is invalid. The idea of a

Perfect Island is categorical (the island belongs to a class of beings); the idea of a perfect being (God) is unique and cannot be included in any category of beings.

The weakness of Anselm's argument is its subjective nature. Just because humans can think of something (a subjective experience), this does not guarantee that it exists outside human thought in objective experience or in reality.

### 5.2 Objections of St. Thomas<sup>8</sup>

In the Summa Theologica, St. Thomas asks the question Does God Exist? As we might expect, He answers that God does exist and that this existence can be demonstrated. It is in his answer to this question that we find his famous Five Ways., Before he presents 'the ways' Thomas makes some clarifications. One of the questions that need to be

answered is 'Is the existence of God self-evident?' If it is, then there is no need to offer proofs. St. Thomas understands Anselm to be saying that God's existence is self-evident since Anselm says it cannot be logically denied. Thomas does not accept this argument, but his reasons are not the same as Gaunilo's. First, he presents the case for self-evidence. The objections always contain reasons that might be given by those who disagree with the final answer of Thomas;

#### Objection 1

It seems that the existence of God is self-evident. For those things are said to be self-evident to us, the knowledge of which exists naturally in us, as we can see in regard to first principles. But as the Damascene says, the knowledge of God is naturally implanted in all. Therefore, the existence of God is self-evident.

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<sup>8</sup> Summa Theologica. Part 1 Question 2 – the existence of God; firstly article- the Existence of God is self-evident, secondly- is it possible to demonstrate the existence of God on page 45-48.

### Objection 2

Further, those things are said to be self-evident, which are known as soon as the terms are known, which the Philosopher says is true of the first principles of demonstration. Thus, when the nature of a whole and of a part is known, it is at once recognized that every whole is greater than its part. But as soon as that signification of the name God is understood, it is at once seen that God exists. For by this name is signified that thing than which nothing greater can be conceived.

But that which exists actually and mentally is greater than that which exists only mentally, it also follows that it exists actually. Therefore, the proposition “God exists” is self-evident.

### Objection 3

Further, the existence of truth is self-evident. For whoever denies the existence of truth grants that truth does not exist, then the proposition “truth does not exist” is true, and if true is anything true, there must be the

truth. Therefore, “God exists” is self-evident.

Thomas now examines the meaning of ‘self-evident.’ A truth of this sort cannot be denied by any sensible person. If I have a banana and cut it in two, the whole is greater than the part. This is self-evident, and if someone disagrees about this, there is no point in continuing to talk. No proof is necessary. To say that the whole is not greater than the part is nonsense. This is the big characteristic of self-evident truths – to claim that the opposite is true is nonsense. So, is the statement ‘God exists’ a self-evident truth? No, it is not because intelligent people can and do say ‘God does not exist.’ They are not talking nonsense; it could be true.

Thomas makes another clarification about self-evidence. Something can be self-evident to someone with special knowledge but not be self-evident to someone who does not have this knowledge. So for example,

the reason why my computer won't work might be self-evident to the expert but a mystery for me.

Thomas does not accept Anselm's definition of God as a being that no greater can be conceived. He says people in the past thought that the world was the greatest thing that could be conceived; so, there is no agreement about this definition.

Some people believe that St. Thomas has given a clear explanation and proof of God's existence with his five ways. Others, however, object that the argument is circular. The existence of God is, in fact, presumed before he begins; it is not a truth that comes as a conclusion to the argument. At the conclusion of five ways, St. Thomas says that there must be a first mover, a first efficient cause, a necessary being, etc. and then he says that all understand that this first mover, efficient cause, a necessary being is God. Those who object to his method might ask, 'How do you know there must be a first

mover, etc.?' You are presuming this, so your argument goes around in circles.

Another important philosopher who rejected the ontological argument was Immanuel Kant. However, he was not writing about the version of Anselm but that of René Descartes which is somewhat similar. Kant believed that these kinds of proof were based on philosophical confusion. In summary, he says that you cannot separate mental existence and real existence because existence is NOT a predicate. You can say 'The man who lives next door is Chinese', and it makes sense. However, to say 'The man who lives next door is non-existent' is non-sense.

When we analyze the idea of God, we come to the conclusion that it cannot be conceived as separated from existence. We do not speak about God's existence but about the idea of itself.

The proofs of the existence of God given by St. Thomas are now rarely referred to and are not accepted

by atheists, but St. Anselm's argument is still a subject of debate. Sometimes people do not deny God theoretically but clearly say that "God doesn't exist" but by their practice.

In more recent times, Kurt Gödel, Charles Hartshorne, Norman Malcolm and Alvin Plantinga have all presented much-discussed ontological arguments which bear interesting connections to the earlier arguments of St. Anselm, of Descartes, and of Leibniz. Of these, the most interesting are those of Gödel and Plantinga; in these cases, however, it is unclear whether we should really say that these authors claim that the arguments are proofs of the existence of God.

## 6. Alvin Plantinga's ontological argument.

6.1 The Oxford Companion to Philosophy gives this introduction to Plantinga;

"An American philosopher known for the way in which he applies results of his work in other areas of analytic philosophy to traditional issues in philosophy of religion. In *God and Other Minds* (1967), he defended the view that belief in other minds and belief in God are, epistemically speaking, on a par: if the former is rational, so is the latter, in the *Nature of Necessity* (1974), he used contemporary modal logic and metaphysics to formulate a valid ontological argument for the existence of God and a rigorous freewill defense of the logical consistency of evil. In more recent work in epistemology, Plantinga has argued for the view that belief in God can, in certain circumstances, be rational and warranted even if it is not based on propositional evidence"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ted Honderich, the oxford companion to Philosophy, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, p.683

The following quote from Joseph Runzo serves to introduce Plantinga's argument:

“Modern versions of the ontological argument such as suggested by Alvin Plantinga, attempt to evade some of the problems with the Anselmian argument ... by appealing to the notion of possible worlds ... developed in modern philosophical thought by Gottfreid Leibniz ... Now a modern version of the ontological argument suggests that God should be thought of as “maximally perfect.” That is, if God exists, God would be a being possessing the perfect set of properties which, taken together, would make a being great. If we grant that this ideal of maximal perfection makes sense, then it is possible that God exists. In

terms of possible worlds, this means that God exists in some possible worlds. But it would be more perfect to exist in all possible worlds, than only in some. Therefore, God exists necessarily, for there is no possible world – including the actual world in which God would not exist. However, this line of reasoning hinges on the supposition that it is possible for a being to possess maximal perfection. Plantinga himself cautions that, while he believes that maximal perfection (or maximal greatness) could be instantiated”<sup>10</sup>

In his book, “The Nature of Necessity”<sup>11</sup> Plantinga lays out the ontological argument using the elements of St. Anselm's argument but with additions to demonstrate that it is reasonable to say that God exists:

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Runzo, Global Philosophy of Religion, One World, Oxford 2001. P.74-75

<sup>11</sup> Alvin Plantinga, The Nature of Necessity, Oxford University Press, New York, USA, 2010 p.198-202.

- (1) God exists in the understanding but not in reality.
- (2) Existence, in reality, is greater than existence in the understanding alone.
- (3) God's existence, in reality, is conceivable.
- (4) If God did exist in reality, then he would be greater than he is (from (1) and (2)).
- (5) It is conceivable that there be a being greater than God is ((3) and (4)).
- (6) It is conceivable that there be a being greater than the being than which nothing greater can be conceived ((5)), by the definition of 'God').
- (7) It is false that it is conceivable that there be a being greater than the being than which none greater can be conceived.
- (8) It is false that God exists in the understanding but not in reality.

The argument then aims to show that this being must be as actual well as possible. For suppose

- (9) God does not exist in the actual world.
- (10) For any worlds  $W$  and  $W'$  and object  $x$ , if  $x$  exists in  $W$  and  $x$  does not exist in  $W'$ , then the greatness of  $x$  in  $W$  exceeds the greatness of  $x$  in  $W'$ .
- (11) It is possible that God exists.
- (12) So, there is a possible world  $W$  such that God exists in  $W$  (from (11)).
- (13) God exists in  $W$  and God does not exist in the actual world (from (9) and (12)).
- (14) If God exists in  $W$  and God does not exist in the actual world, then the greatness of God in  $W$  exceeds the greatness of God in the actual world (from (10)).

- (15) So, the greatness of God in W exceeds the greatness of God in the actual world ((13) and (14)).
- (16) So, there is a possible being x and a world W such that the greatness of x in W exceeds the greatness of God in actuality (15).
- (17) So, it is possible that there be a being greater than God is (16).
- (18) Hence it is possible that there be a being greater than the being than which it is not possible that there be a greater (from (17) by definition of 'God').
- (19) It is not possible that there be a being greater than the being than which it is not possible that there be a greater.<sup>12</sup>

It takes a lot of concentration to follow the line of the above argument and see how the conclusion is arrived at. Joseph Runzo uses Plantinga's own words to explain how he understands the value of this argument.

“We must ask whether this argument ... proves the existence of God. And the answer must be, I think, that it does not ... Not everyone who understands and reflects on its central premise ... will accept it. Still ... it is evident ... that there is nothing contrary to reason or irrational in accepting this premise. What I claim for this argument, therefore, is that it establishes, not the truth of theism, but its rational acceptability”<sup>13</sup>

Brian Davies expresses more or less the same idea

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<sup>12</sup> A philosophical analysis of strengths and weaknesses of this argument is given in the following website Conc <http://existence-of-god.com/ontological-objections.html>

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Runzo, Global Philosophy of Religion, One World, Oxford 2001. P.74-75

“The “victorious” modal ontological argument of Plantinga (in his 1974 book) goes roughly as follows: Say that an entity possesses “maximal excellence” if and only if it is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect. Say, further, that an entity possesses “maximal greatness” if and only if it possesses maximal excellence in every possible world—that is, if and only if it is necessarily existent and necessarily maximally excellent”<sup>14</sup>

Plantinga’s argument could also be simplified and formulated in this way:

**Premise 1:**

It is possible that God exists.

**Premise 2:**

If it is possible that God exists, then God exists in some possible worlds.

**Premise 3:**

If God exists in some possible worlds, then God exists in all possible worlds.

**Premise 4:**

If God exists in all possible worlds, then God exists in the actual world.

**Premise 5:**

If God exists in the actual world, then God exists.<sup>15</sup>

He affirms that the ontological argument of St. Anselm is still reasonable and can today be understood like this

“It is certainly valid; given its premise, the conclusion follows.

The only question of interest, it seems to me, is whether its main premise—that maximal greatness is possibly instantiated—is true. I think it is true; hence I think this

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<sup>14</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ontological-arguments/>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://existence-of-god.com/ontological-objections.html>

version of the ontological argument is sound. But here, we must be careful; we must ask whether this argument is a successful piece of natural theology, whether it proves the existence of God. And the answer must be, I think, that it does not. An argument for God's existence may be sound, after all, without in any useful sense proving God's existence”<sup>16</sup>.

Plantinga is frequently invited to speak in public debates etc. although he is now in his 89<sup>th</sup> year. In some of his recent ‘appearances’ on YouTube, he is easier to understand. To finish this section, I will summarize what he says in a video conference available on the internet.<sup>17</sup>

He is in agreement with Thomas Aquinas. The great majority of people do not need any proof; they simply trust and live-in faith. But arguments like those of Anselm or Aquinas or

their modern equivalents can be useful to those who want to reflect on the foundations of their faith.

Does Plantinga believe that he has proved the existence of God? No, but there are two good reasons for giving time to studying this kind of subject. First the logical arguments that can be developed are at least as strong as the logical arguments given by atheists. It is a logical fallacy to say first, ‘I can't prove that God exists’ and then say ‘Therefore God does not exist’. All one can say is, ‘I am unable to either prove or disprove it. Secondly, although the believer cannot prove God's existence conclusively, the arguments from reason that philosophers have given are a support to a life of faith.

Plantinga says that everyone has sensus divinitatis means one of the ‘pieces of information’ these faculties give us is a sense or tendency to

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<sup>16</sup> Brian Davies, *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.351.

<sup>17</sup> Interview met Alvin Plantinga (Nederlandse ondertiteling), Jeroen de Ridder, 7 oktober 2016.

believe that there is some supreme being, and a very important point in Plantinga's writing is that it is reasonable to believe some things to be true even if 'scientific' or empirical proofs are not available. Not everything can be, or needs to be, proved.

## 7. Conclusion

Does Plantinga prove that God exists? Brian Davies explains:

"This is not a proof; no one who didn't already accept the conclusion, would accept the first premise. The ontological argument we've been examining isn't just like this one, of course, but it must be conceded that not everyone who understands and reflects on its central premise—that the existence of a maximally great being is possible—will accept it".<sup>18</sup>

Plantinga would fully agree. He writes:

"Our verdict on these reformulated versions of St. Anselm's argument must be as follows. They cannot, perhaps, be said to prove or establish their conclusion. But since it is rational to accept their central premise, they do show that it is rational to accept that conclusion".<sup>19</sup>

In making a judgment on his work, we have to ask, 'Does he achieve what he set out to do?' And what he set out to do was simple – not to prove that God exists but to show that the person who believes in God is not mentally unstable. He or she is doing something perfectly reasonable. Did he succeed? That depends on the extent to which people understand him. Joseph Runzo points out that

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<sup>14</sup> Interview met Alvin Plantinga (Nederlandse ondertiteling), Jeroen de Ridder, 7 oktober 2016. p.351.

<sup>15</sup> Alvin Plantinga, the nature of Necessity, Oxford University Press, New York, USA, 2010. p.221.

## Anselm's ontological argument and its relevance.

when philosophers discuss the argument of St. Anselm, they ask if his method is valid; that is, does the conclusion follow from the premises? Secondly, they ask are his premises are sound – in other words, are they true? Even if those conditions are met, there is a third question: Is the argument convincing? Anselm's proof did not convince a lot of his critics. Plantinga does not set out to prove anything other than that faith is reasonable. After that, he says, a lot depends on experience rather than logic or philosophy. In this area, he has made an important contribution.

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