

Philosophy of Religion

1. *The Ontological Argument*

Explain the Ontological Arguments of Anselm, Descartes, and Plantinga. Can any of these provide a convincing proof of the existence of God? If not, is this for the reason identified by Kant, or for some other reason?

1. Essential Sources

The following classic texts are available in many collections, for example Alvin Plantinga (ed.), *The Ontological Argument* (Macmillan, 1968), or John Hick and Arthur McGill (eds), *The Many-Faced Argument* (Macmillan, 1968):

Anselm, Saint, *Proslogion* chapters 2-4

Gaunilo, *In Behalf of the Fool*

Anselm, Saint, *Reply to Gaunilo*

Descartes, René, *Meditations V* (and the relevant objections and replies)

Kant, Immanuel, "The Impossibility of an Ontological Proof of the Existence of God", in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Dialectic, Book II, Chapter III, Section 4.

Plantinga's version of the argument is in his *The Nature of Necessity* (OUP, 1974), chapter 10, or *God, Freedom and Evil* (George Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp 85-112.

2. Critical Discussions

A general discussion and critique, which covers Anselm, Descartes and Plantinga, is given by J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (OUP, 1982), chapter 3.

A more sympathetic discussion is by Brian Leftow's chapter on "The Ontological Argument" in William Wainwright, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*.

A sympathetic overview that raises some interesting points about Anselm's argument is in chapter 4 of Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (OUP, second edition 1993).

Anselm is critically discussed in detail (with quicker dismissal of Descartes and Plantinga) by Peter Millican, "The One Fatal Flaw in Anselm's Argument", *Mind* 113 (2004), pp. 437-76.

A monumental compilation of ontological arguments, better on Descartes and Plantinga than on Anselm, is provided by Graham Oppy, *The Ontological Argument* (Cambridge 1995).