

## 1 Existence and the ontological argument

Which does Anselm endorse (in “more current terminology”)?

- (a) Existence alone is greater than merely being conceived of.
- (b) Existence and being conceived of are together greater than merely being conceived of.

Malcolm: In endorsing at least (b) (but probably (a) as well), Anselm is saying that *existence is a perfection*.

- Descartes agrees.

“The doctrine that existence is a perfection is remarkably queer. It makes sense and is true to say that my future house will be a better one if it is insulated than if it is not insulated; but what could it mean to say that it will be a better house if it exists than if it does not? My future child will be a better man if he is honest than if he is not; but who would understand the saying that he will be a better man if he exists than if he does not? Or who understands the saying that if God exists He is more perfect than if He does not exist? One might say, with some intelligibility, that it would be better (for oneself or for mankind) if God exists than if He does not – but that is a different matter.” (Malcolm, 615)

The chancellor example: Suppose A and B both draw up lists of their ideal chancellor, and the lists are the same except that B includes “existence” as a desired attribute. Any person satisfying one list will necessarily satisfy the other, and vice versa.

- Kant: Existence is not a property.
- Descartes: “I do not see to what class of reality you wish to assign existence, nor do I see why it may not be said to be a property as well as omnipotence, taking the word property as equivalent to any attribute or anything which can be predicated of a thing, as in the present case it should be by all means regarded. Nay, necessary existence in the case of God is also a true property in the strictest sense of the word, because it belongs to Him and forms part of His essence alone.” (quoted in Malcolm, 619-20)

## 2 Perfections

What exactly are the perfections that are supposed to belong to God?

- Perfection = excellence = greatest of attribute X = ...?
- Candidates: knowledge, power, existence, independence, unlimitedness
  - In particular, *necessary* knowledge, *necessary* power, etc.

Does necessary existence belong to the concept of God?

- “To conceive of anything as dependent upon something else for its existence is to conceive of it as a lesser being than God.” (Malcolm, 617)
- Malcolm: If God can just happen to exist, then it makes sense to ask how long he existed for – but this is absurd.
  - Malcolm thinks eternity is not the same as endless duration – is this right?
- Argument: God cannot contingently exist.
  - If God could contingently exist, then he could also not exist.
  - But if God could not exist, then God would be limited.
    - This is because then if he existed, his coming into existence would depend on or be caused by something else, or he would happen to exist.
  - Therefore, God cannot contingently exist.