

DISCUSSION NOTES ON THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT: NECESSARY EXISTENCE

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In light of the slides and pod cast, discuss the following:

A. Consider the following:

1. Santa Claus is by definition the greatest gift giver conceivable.
2. An actual gift giver is by definition greater than an imaginary gift giver.
3. If an actual gift giver is greater than an imaginary one, then the greatest gift giver must be an actual one and not imaginary.
4. But (per premise 1) no gift giver can be conceptually greater than Santa Claus.
5. Therefore, Santa Claus exists.



In light of the discussion of necessity and contingency, why might advocates of the ontological argument deny the possibility of this argument?

- B. In the podcast, there was discussion of the principle of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing). What is the relevance of this to the ontological argument? How does discussion of the creator-creature distinction affect the way we think about contingency?
- C. Look at the slides on Norman Malcolm. How does his account of limited and unlimited and of dependent and independent existence affect the way you understand the issue of necessary existence? How convincing do you find this?
- D. Does the account of necessary existence and the use of Wittgenstein by Malcolm just add to Karl Barth's position about the ontological argument? For Barth, the point of the ontological argument is that it starts WITH FAITH and reasons how God is possible from the perspective of faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*—faith seeking understanding) rather than engaging in the activity of proving THAT God exists from logic (which would be wrongly to ascribe *fides qua creditor*—I believe so that I might understand) to Anselm.
- E. What significance might there be to the fact that Gaunilo was a monk and therefore a Christian in terms of the way we think of the ontological argument? Does this fact show the ontological argument is a piece of internal logic for the Christian faith rather than a proof for the existence of God?