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theism outside traditional metaphysics is a fish out of water. Once we concede this choice of battlefield, the battle is already lost. Despite overarching disputes over fundamental assumptions, Oppy argues so many details so persuasively that any opponent must incorporate Oppy's insights into an opposing theory in order to make such viable. This is indeed one hallmark of a rightly influential work.

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prove this.

If theists are reasonable, are non-theists unreasonable? This certainly does not follow from the previous discussion. While "it is possible that it is necessarily the case that God exists" is a perfectly reasonable premise, "it is possible that it is necessarily the case that God does not exist" is also (Oppy 1996: 65). Though an appeal to the presential knowledge of inner experience may be sufficient grounds to convince the believer of the former, non-believers need not accept the very idea of presential knowledge let alone its application here. Thus modal arguments do nothing to alter the presumable rationality of non-theistic belief. For advocates of Neo-Platonic arguments in turn non-theists are denying a primary self-evident truth. Yet plenty of ostensibly reasonable people (Hegelians, Marxists, Post-Modernists) in some relevant sense reject the law of non-contradiction.

What of "the absolute security of theistic belief"? Oppy (1996) rejects this, but again with a funny interpretation. Only now the interpretation is not his own but that of Kielkopf. Oppy rejects Kielkopf's argument as it hinges on an ontological argument with premises the non-believer will find incompatible (viz. that doubting entails thinking of God and that thinking of God entails positing His reality).

Yet one can much better establish the "absolute security of theistic belief" via ontological arguments than has Kielkopf. One can use either a Neo-Platonic argument, or verify the possibility premise of modal arguments via presential knowledge of inner experience. Putting aside the "absolute security of theistic belief" (emphasis added), ontological arguments - by virtue of a) being formally valid and b) involving reasonable premises - can reasonably help dispel believers' doubts.

Conclusion

Whether or not one agrees with Graham Oppy's (1996) assumptions or primary theses, one must appreciate the obvious care and thought that went into writing Ontological Arguments and Belief in God. Nevertheless, while Oppy's primary theses do follow from his assumptions, one need not accept the latter. As his primary assumption, Oppy takes modern Anglophone analytic philosophy to be the self-evident choice of philosophic context for his project. In his own sense of the term, he thereby begs the question. Intellectual

– are not forceful as once thought, why do ontological arguments invariably disappoint "those who mistakenly sought a way to use the force of logic to coerce the atheist to admit the existence of God" (Legenhausen 2004b:165)? Oppy (1996) has an excellent explanation for this. Ontological arguments, insofar as they are valid, are fundamentally question-begging. This insight is not original to Oppy, yet he develops it quite a bit further. He uses "question-begging" here in a nuanced sense, not as a logical fallacy (of which ontological arguments are usually innocent lest all arguments be guilty) yet as a dialectical impasse. For Oppy, "begging the question" means employing premises one's opponent may reasonably reject. Question-begging arguments can indeed be sound – they are just "dialectically impotent." Oppy admits the possibility of sound ontological arguments, yet denies such are of any use in persuading non-believers. From this he infers that ontological arguments are invariably "worthless."

Is this a valid inference? Can there be other worthwhile uses for ontological arguments besides trying to convince non-believers? Oppy (1996), in his final chapter prior to a brief conclusion, considers and rejects three such possible uses. First is the claim that ontological arguments establish the "rationality of theistic belief" if not the necessity thereof. Secondly is the much stronger claim that ontological arguments demonstrate the "irrationality of nontheistic belief." Finally there is the claim that ontological arguments demonstrate the "absolute security of theistic belief."

Oppy (1996) rejects the first claim, associated with Plantinga, yet interprets it in a funny way. He seems to consider it as entailing or meaning that theism is "uniquely" rational or "most" rational. This would require justifying the premises of ontological arguments (viz. the possibility premise in modal arguments) as at least probable if not necessary, yet certainly more than just "reasonable." Plantinga's advocacy of modal ontological arguments fails this purpose. Yet others (Legenhausen, 2004b) have interpreted Plantinga quite differently, not as saying theism is "uniquely" rational or "most" rational, but simply saying that theists need not be shipped off to the "funny farm." On this interpretation, ontological arguments fare considerably better. Then again, Oppy already agrees up front that theists are perfectly reasonable and does not require ontological arguments to

Amuli (2002) severely criticizes this sort of reasoning as it is found in Kant –the same appearing by extension to apply to Yazdi. According to Amuli, the analogy is misleading; the concept of existence is an essential part of "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" whereas it is not an essential part of a triangle. Given this, one must predicate the concept of existence of Anselm's Being – even if for Amuli this need not entail predicating the reality of existence of the same.

It is perhaps surprising that contemporary Sadrean philosophers have been so influenced by Kant's criticisms of the ontological argument – even in Amuli's case calling Anselm's argument "corrupt and defective" (Amuli 2002:18) This may be less surprising coming from Yazdi (1999), given that all arguments he presents are of a thoroughly cosmological character. Coming from Amuli and Tabataba'i it is somewhat confusing given their advocacy of what to Western eyes amounts to an "ontological" reading of the burhan al-siddiqin.

In assenting to Kant's "existence is not a predicate" dictum, Tabataba'i may as well be refuting his own formulation of the burhan al-siddiqin from Elements of Islamic Metaphysics. Amuli (2002) wishes to maintain that knowledge of the Necessary, while a priori, is not analytic. Prima facie, this would seem to commit Amuli to some form of the view that knowledge of the Necessary is synthetic a priori – yet nonetheless ampliative. This would appear (again prima facie) a very odd tack and one wonders how it would prove tenable yet alone justified.

Perhaps the possibility that contemporary Sadrean philosophers may not be familiar with more sophisticated, modal readings of Anselm can account for their hostility to Anselm. Within Shi'a philosophical circles, Legenhausen (2004b) - who is indeed familiar with such modal interpretations - has a more charitable view:

Anselm has proved that a negative characterization of divinity is sufficient to derive existence, and necessary existence, at that, given the assumption provided by faith that the description refers to a possible object. That is no small feat, even if it disappoints those who mistakenly sought a way to use the force of logic to coerce the atheist to admit the existence of God. (Legenhausen 2004b:165)

Yet if the Kantian objections – and their Islamic parallels

nuclear" predicate.

Oppy (1996: 29) gives two readings of Kant's claim to the effect that "no negative existentials are self-contradictory." On the first, more conventional reading, it is blatantly question-begging. On another reading, though, Kant correctly identifies the question begging character of the ontological argument. Using Kant's parallel example of triangles, all triangles have three sides, but this is no reason to accept the existence of triangles with three sides – only reason to reject triangles with four. We cannot accept the subject yet reject the predicate. However, we can reject both together as a package. According to Oppy's second reading, this analogy underscores the presupposition of the subject ("that than which nothing greater can be conceived") in the ontological argument in order that it may realize its predicate (viz. existence).

In contemporary Islamic philosophy Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi (1999) gives a very similar argument against affirming entified reality as an analytic truth in his book Philosophical Instructions:

Perhaps it will be said that these affirmations [of entified reality] are primary self-evident truths (badihiyyat-e awwaliyyah), for which the mere imagining of their subjects and predicates suffices to produce assent.

But this claim is also incorrect, for if we assume that a proposition is in the form of a 'primary predication', it is clear that its purport will not be anything but the conceptual unity of subject and predicate. If we suppose that it is in the form of a 'common predication' and we consider its subject to refer to external instances, and we consider it to be what in logical terminology is called essential necessity (daruriyyat-e dhati-yyah), then the truth of such a proposition will be conditional on the existence of the subject in the external world, while this means that its objective existence would be proved by this proposition. In other words, propositions about reality are like conditional propositions in that their purport us that whenever an instance of the subject obtains in the external world, the predicate for it will be proven. For example, the famous self-evident proposition, "Every whole is greater than its own part," is not able to prove the existence of whole and part in the external world. Rather, its meaning is that whenever a whole obtains in the external world, it will be greater than its own part. (Yazdi, 1999: 191)

- point of view) applies first and foremost to reality and derivatively to concepts and essences – not vice versa. At this point Amuli to our view is beginning to sound a lot like saying "just because something is logically supposed to be a certain way does not mean it actually is that way in the real world." While commonplace in modern Western philosophy, this is a dangerous line for Amuli to take as it endangers the entire Sadrean project – or any traditional metaphysics for that matter.

That "existence is not a predicate" is Kant's most famous and oft-quoted objection to the ontological argument. For Kant, existence is always properly the "transitive is" – the "cupola between subject and predicate." As such, it can never be a genuine predicate in itself. Oppy (1996) devotes an entire chapter to this objection, considering over half a dozen different "defenses" of Kant's view – yet does not buy a single one of them. All of these discussions are thoroughly couched in the diction of modern linguistic philosophy. What is at issue is whether existence is a grammatical and/or logical predicate. Oppy tentatively and with qualification proposes that indeed it is - and even were it not, such would not undermine all ontological arguments.

In Islamic philosophy, meanwhile, the question of existence being a predicate has been more metaphysically oriented. While agreeing that existence is indeed a grammatical and logical predicate, Islamic philosophers have denied that it is any sort of accident inhering in substances. Izutsu (1971) discusses such at some length in The Concept and Reality of Existence, as does Akbarian (2000) in Existence as a Predicate in Kant and Mulla Sadra. Moreover, Amuli (2002) reports Allamah Tabataba'i to have cited Kant's dictum that "existence is not a predicate" as the proper objection to Anselm's argument.

Nevertheless, Amuli (2002) disagrees and critiques both Kant and the Allamah on the basis of the Sadrean doctrine of the "synonymy of existence" (al-ishterak al-ma'nawi lil-wujud). "Existence" (wujud) always has the same meaning, whenever, wherever and whichever way used. Kant illegitimately distinguishes the "transitive is" in meaning from the "intransitive is." For Amuli, existence - while adding nothing to the extension of its subject - nevertheless is (contra Kant) a meaningful grammatical/logical predicate. This parallels what Oppy (1996) says about existence being a genuine yet "non-

mutually exhaustive is not uncontroversial. Second, this objection is blatantly question-begging as the ontological argument presents a possible counterexample. One cannot legitimately deny the counterexample merely by affirming the original dictum more adamantly. Finally, there are other (albeit not unproblematic) counterexamples – namely in mathematics.

Ayatullah Javadi Amuli's (2002) critique of Anselm's argument in A Commentary on Theistic Arguments, takes a similar line to Kant's first objection. Amuli takes the Sadrean distinction between "extensional" and "intentional" predication as the basis of the one knockdown refutation of Anselm. "Extensional predication" predicates unrelated concepts of each other as united in existence. "Intentional predication" predicates intrinsically related concepts of each other as united in essence. Analytic claims are necessarily of the latter character, and existential claims of the former. Hence the two can never overla

When Anselm predicates existence of "that than which nothing greater can be conceived," he either predicates the "concept of existence" of this Being or predicates the "reality of existence" of it. If the former, then he is correct in so doing a priori, yet this carries with it no ontological commitments. In the latter case, for Amuli (2002) this is not a legitimate exercise. Amuli similarly critiques the "demonstrations of the gnostics" in Islamic philosophy. One such argument, similar to one Legenhausen (2004a) identifies with Turkah Isfahani, Amuli presents (and rejects) as follows:

Existence qua existence (al-wujud bi ma huwa al-wujud) does not accept non-existence.

Something, which does not accept non-existence, is necessary.

Therefore, existence qua existence is necessary. (Amuli, 2002:164-65)

Amuli (2002) rejects this argument as invalid. The premises refer necessarily to the concept of existence, hence it being illegitimate to derive any conclusions about the reality of existence. Certainly, if the premises are only about the concept of existence, then Amuli is right. Yet why cannot the premises themselves refer to the reality of existence? The first premise is simply an application of the law of non-contradiction (albeit with a special metaphysical interpretation). This law should be valid for objective existence, not just for essences and concepts. Logic (from a classical realist – e.g. Sadrean

philosophical meanings of "unity." "It is not mingled with anything other than itself" (Tabataba'i 2003:133) means existence is simple while "it has no other or second" (Tabataba'i 2003:133) means it is unique.

Existence, being simple and unique, must necessarily exist. Existence has neither parts nor others to cause it. As the Allamah says, "it is self-contradictory to regard this necessity as deriving from something else, for, in this case, there is no 'other' or second" (Tabataba'i 2003:133). Here Tabataba'i paraphrases an argument from the Greek sage Parmenides. Indeed, the Allmah's entire rendition of the burhan al-siddqin here seems to echo Parmenides' dictum "what is is and cannot not be."

In the next sentence Tabataba'i (2003) makes an astounding move. "This is so because . . ." (Tabataba'i 2003:133). Here he reverses the previous operation. Before Necessary Existence was the natural consequence of Mulla Sadra's whole philosophical system. Now that whole system is the natural consequence of the postulate that existence necessarily exists. Tabataba'i accordingly shows the Existence and Unity of the Necessary Being, the fundamentality and unity of existence generally, and the question of entified reality most generally, all to be one and the same question with one and the same answer. He then reduces this single prehension to the (aforementioned special metaphysical) law of identity.

2. Objections

While there are certainly objections to each and every argument mentioned above, Oppy (1996) also covers several more "global" objections. These include those of Aquinas, Hume, Kant and the logical positivists. Here we focus on Kant, as his critique has been the most influential – both in the West and within contemporary Sadrean criticisms of Western ontological arguments. Oppy characterizes Kant's critique as involving "three distinct objections": "there are no analytic existence claims," "existence is not a predicate" and "no negative existentials are self-contradictory" (Oppy 1996: 29).

According to Oppy (1996: 29), "the weakest objection that Kant makes" is that "there are no analytic existence claims." Oppy presents three potential problems this dictum runs up against. First, the analytic/synthetic distinction Kant takes as both mutually exclusive and

In stating that "it is necessary for a thing to be what it is and impossible for it to be its own contradictory, which is non-existence in this case," Tabataba'i (2003) invokes the law of identity. This is not the common logical law of identity - at least not in the sense of modern logic. It is a special metaphysical law of identity. As per modern logic, the law of identity simply says a thing is what it is as long as it continues to be what it is. This is just the idea that things do not accept contradictory predicates simultaneously ("simultaneously" being key). After all, bachelors are bachelors yet they marry every day. With the "metaphysical" law of identity, though, some predicates are accidental and others essential. The latter describe identity. The prohibition on contradictory predicates in this cases applies necessarily and regardless of temporal considerations.

Bachelorhood is an accidental predicate. Human, by contrast, is an essential predicate. While material human can become imaginal human can become intelligible human through the process of transubstantial motion, human may never become an antelope or an artichoke – such being what Islamic philosophers dubbed (and deemed impossible) as "transmutation." Human is necessarily human. Likewise, existence necessarily exists by virtue of being existence. The Allamah's great pupil Shahid Mutahhari put the same principle in only slightly different terms, claiming it "senseless for a thing to be devoid of itself" (Mutahhari 2002). He thought questioning such was absurd, akin to asking "Why is the number one, one? Why did it not become two? Why did two become number two and not one, and why it didn't it take the place of one?" (Mutahhari 2002). As such Mutahhari and Tabataba'i (2003) assume a theory of necessary identity as primary-self-evident. Thus they deny any theory of contingent identity prima facie.

Tabataba'i (2003) presents the necessary "existence of existence" as both entailed by and entailing, the basics of Sadrean general ontology. In the first sentence of the passage, the Allamah presents the necessary existence of existence as the outcome of Mulla Sadra's whole philosophical system. The Allamah specifically mentions as relevant the fundamentality and absoluteness of existence. That existence is absolute may refer to the Unity of Being. In saying existence "is not mingled with anything other than itself" and "has no other or second," Tabataba'i (2003:133) covers the two primary

the living heck out of it? Moreover, one need not do so in a pejorative sense: as Oppy admits, question begging ontological arguments may perhaps be perfectly sound. Yet if this is the case, why not just eliminate the premises - which are really no more certain than the conclusion? If the conclusion can stand alone a priori, then why not let it do so?

One may note that in contemporary Islamic philosophy, this has been the approach of Allamah Tabataba'i (2003). As Ayatullah Javadi Amuli (2002) points out in A Commentary on Theistic Arguments, Allamah Tabataba'i was the first Islamic philosopher to strip the burhan al-sidiqin of all premises and affirm the naked truth of the Necessary Being. However, the existence of a deity encumbered with theological baggage is hardly self-evident. For that matter, if such baggage includes personalism, voluntarism, and other (from the Sadrean viewpoint) theological mistakes - as is frequent, then the deity in question is even false. Yet Allamah Tabataba'i, like those propounding Neo-Platonic arguments in the West, strips his deity of nearly all theological baggage in order to establish its existence a priori. All that is left is the concept of "Necessary Existence." This concept in turn finds its extension in "the reality of existence" such that "the reality of existence is necessarily existent."

The Allamah's argument is both Neo-Platonic (insofar as it proclaims a priori an ontological ground) and modal (insofar as it involves necessity). At least one of the Allamah's formulations of the sidiqin argument (from Elements of Islamic Metaphysics) is also definitional via the aforementioned "loophole" - viz. existence exists by definition:

The reality of existence is necessarily existent, for it is fundamental (there being nothing fundamental except it) and absolute (sirf) (for it is not mingled with anything other than itself, as it has no other or second, as mentioned in Chapter One). This is so because it is necessary for a thing to be what it is and impossible for it to be its own contradictory, which is non-existence in this case. Further, this necessity (wujub) derives either from itself (bi al-dhat) or from something else (bi al-ghayr). However, it is self-contradictory to regard this necessity as deriving from something else, for, in this case, there is no 'other' or second. Hence it is necessarily existent-by-itself (wajib al wujud bi al-dhat). (Tabataba'i 2003:133)

(considering Being a mere mental abstraction), what is so significant is that Qaysari put forth (even if indirectly) this form of theistic argument.

Another form of modal argument Oppy (1996) discusses is that of "modal arguments involving explicability." These derive God's existence from the premise that "[i]t is impossible that anything prevent the existence of God" (Oppy 1996: 79). It does so by virtue of reasoning that were God not to exist, nothing could possibly account for this fact (assuming all facts require accounting for a la the principle of sufficient reason). In Islamic philosophy, Shaykh al Ishraq Shahib ad-din Suhrawardi presents a very similar proof:

A thing does not imply its own nonbeing, or else it would never enter reality. The Light of Lights is unitary, having by its own essence no condition, and everything else follows from it. If It has no condition and no opposite, nothing can nullify It, so It is eternal and everlasting. No state, be it luminous or dark, adheres to the Light of Lights, and it may have no attribute in any respect. (Suhrawardi 2000: 88)

This is the first explicit ontological proof in the history of Islamic philosophy. While many claim Ibn Sina developed an ontological proof, he melded his together with a cosmological argument, yielding a hybrid, "onto-cosmological" argument. It was Suhrawardi in the Philosophy of Illumination who first separated these two strands, giving two separate arguments – one being an independent a priori poof.

While the preceding are all properly speaking arguments, Oppy (1996) questions whether this is true of the Neo-Platonic species of Hegelian interpretations of Anselm et al. According to the Neo-Platonic "argument," it is self-evident a priori that there must exist an "ontological ground." There is no structure of premises necessarily leading to a conclusion – merely the conclusion itself. This is more an "ontological insight" than an "ontological argument." Oppy considers this to lead to a dialectical "impasse." When one party simply affirms its conclusions more adamantly rather than providing further justification, no progress is possible by way of dialogue. In some sense Oppy is right. All ontological proofs ultimately reach such an impasse and "beg the question" in some more nuanced sense of the phrase. As long as we are begging the question, though, why not beg

The one is as valid as the other. Hence the problem lies with the premises – which is more reasonable? For the theist, it is more reasonable to posit God's possible necessary existence. For the atheist, the necessity of God's non-existence forms the better bet. As for the agnostic such as Oppy, one must be the case, yet there is no reason to suppose which. Perhaps we may field a suggestion based on the idea of presential knowledge (ilm al huduri) in Islamic philosophy. Through one's infallible and direct, unmediated knowledge of one's own thoughts, one can perceive whether something is a genuine organically unified concept and mental existent - or a mere pastiche of different mentally spoken words. If the former, then the concept represents a possible being, this presumably being the case with God. Of course, neither Oppy nor any other non-theist is likely to accept this metaphysics of the mind. Yet this may be for theists to justify (to themselves at any rate) their commitment to the possible necessary existence of God - without relying on the pre-supposed actual necessary existence of the same.

There is also a history of modal ontological arguments in Islamic philosophy. In some sense all Islamic ontological arguments are modal arguments insofar as they define God as the "Necessary Being" (wajib al wujud). Both Morewedge (1979) and Mayer (2001) have pointed this out in their respective analyses of Ibn Sina's proof. Perhaps Dawud al Qaysari's rephrasing of Ibn Sina's proof more directly anticipates modern readings of Anselm in the West:

Being is necessary by itself. If it were to be a [merely] possible [being], there would have been an existing cause for it. But this necessitates that a thing precede itself. We cannot say that the possible being does not need a cause in its existence. The possible being, for us, does not exist because it is [a] purely relative (i'tibari) [being]. We do not accept that the purely relative being does not need a cause. It [i.e. the purely relative/contingent being] becomes actual only in regard to a thinking subject which is its cause. (Kalin1999)

Here Qaysari gives a lemma for the first premise in an implicit argument as follows:

1.If Being exists, then It exists necessarily.

2.Being exists.

3.(Hence) Being exists necessarily.

While the non-believer is unlikely to grant the second premise

While the principle itself is couched in highly technical terms, it would appear in plain(er) English to suggest that any given existent is greater than any given non-existent. Hence we can construct a lemma verifying the second premise:

1. If a being than which no greater can be conceived does not exist, then I can conceive of something that exists.

2. Any given existent is greater than any given non-existent.

3. (Hence) If a being than which no greater can be conceived does not exist, then I can conceive of a being greater than a being than which no greater can be conceived.

Yet why accept any such "bridge principle" in the first place? Or, rather, how is one to even make sense of it? Perhaps, Oppy elsewhere notes other authors as suggesting, "in the context of a Neoplatonic metaphysics that makes essential use of the notion of degrees of existence" (Oppy 1996:168). This would seem to hang together well with the Sadrean doctrine of the gradation of existence (tashkik al wujud). It has the additional virtue of stripping many parodies of their force (e.g. Gaunilo's greatest conceivable island). Nevertheless, as Oppy notes, "If the argument is taken to rely on Neoplatonic metaphysics, then it is completely lacking in probative force; there are very few nonbelievers who are committed to such a metaphysics" (Oppy 1996:170).

Another reading of Anselm's arguments is as modal arguments. This interpretation has gained great popularity in some philosophical circles over the past several decades under the leadership of writers such as Plantinga and Hartshorne. Oppy gives a simple example of "modal arguments involving actuality":

1. It is possible that it is actually the case that God exists. (Premise)

2. (Hence) God exists. (From 1) (Oppy 1996: 65)

Replace "actually" with "necessarily" and one has a "modal argument involving necessity." As Oppy notes, "There are modal logics in which this is a valid argument." He moreover sees no need to contest the applicability of these logics to the case at hand. However, he does see the need to bring forth this parallel argument:

1. It is possible that it is actually the case that God does not exist. (Premise)

2. (Hence) God does not exist. (From 1) (Oppy 1996: 65)

ful as trying to milk a chicken. Things exist in spite of, not because of, their whatness. From the Sadrean perspective, such could be a fatal blow to all definitional ontological arguments.

Yet there is one possible loophole. While it is impossible for any quiddity to exist by definition, existence is not a quiddity; perhaps existence exists by definition – and does so necessarily. Oppy may here wish to object that even if this be so, such is of no direct theological consequence. After all, the atheist Ayn Rand issued the famous dictum "existence exists." However, when Islamic philosophy defines God simply as "the Necessary Being" (wajib al wujud), saying existence necessarily exists is to deify existence. Here we begin entering the world of the burhan al-sidiqin. Even with the definitional element, though, such resembles more the Neo-Platonic arguments Oppy (1996) considers under the "Hegelian arguments" chapter, so we will postpone our discussion of these matters till then.

Whereas Descartes' is arguably more a sort of definitional argument, one popular way of interpreting Anselm's argument is as a conceptual argument. Oppy provides one such interpretation:

1. I conceive of a being than which no greater can be conceived.

2. If a being than which no greater can be conceived does not exist, then I can conceive of a being greater than a being than which no greater can be conceived – namely, a being than which no greater than can be conceived that exists.

3. I cannot conceive of a being greater than a being no greater than which can be conceived.

4. (Hence) A being no greater than which can be conceived exists. (Oppy 1996:59-60)

As Oppy (1996) points out, there is potentially an immediate objection to the third premise. Namely, one can indeed conceive of a being greater than a being no greater than which can be conceived – otherwise one would not be able to speak of it intelligibly. As Oppy says, the solution is to change "conceive" to "coherently conceive" – not just in the third premise but throughout. Of course, though, many nonbelievers would not grant the first premise on this new formulation.

Oppy (1996) also points out that any non-believer who is willing to accept the first premise will not accept the second. However, he goes on to discuss a possible "bridge principle" Makin suggested.

1. Fifty-Seven Varieties

After a Preface, an Introduction and a first chapter sketching out a brief history of ontological arguments in Western philosophy, the real fun begins. Oppy (1996) launches into six consecutive chapters - one for each type of ontological argument in his taxonomy. Definitional arguments argue that "God exists" is true by definition (hence the atheist critique of ontological arguments as "defining God into existence") while conceptual arguments argue from our conception of the Divine to the latter's external reality. Modal arguments in turn argue from the possibility of God's Existence to the necessity or actuality of the same. Next come Meinongian and experiential arguments, which argue a priori for the Existence of God on the basis of a Meinongian theory of objects and religious experience respectively. Finally are the "Hegelian" arguments, with seemingly little in common other than Oppy's admittedly tenuous designation. Oppy holds that these six types cover all ontological arguments. Of these, definitional and conceptual arguments are most historically important in the West, while modal arguments have found the most contemporary favor and the "Neo-Platonic" subspecies of "Hegelian" arguments arguably parallel the burhan al-sidiqin.

One can state definitional arguments along the following lines:
1. God is an existent supremely perfect being. (Definition)
2. (Hence) God exists. (From 1) (Oppy 1996: 47)

The problem? As Oppy (1996) points out, we can "prove" literally anything to exist this way: existent unicorns, existent Martians, etc. As Oppy notes later in the book, Stone has proposed a similar problem by asking whether such and such is an "essential property" or "pasted together out of various features." In this case, one may wish to argue that "existent supremely perfect being" figures in as the former and "existent unicorn" or "existent Martian" as the latter. This is an echo of Descartes' talk of "true and immutable natures." Oppy responds that "what theists find 'natural' is likely to be quite different from what atheists and agnostics find 'natural.'"

Sadrean philosophy may have an interesting point to add here. While Stone is on the right track with bringing to the fore the question of "essential properties," according to the fundamentality of existence (asalat al wujud), existence is never the essential property of a "whatness." Trying to extract existence from a quiddity is as fruit-

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As Long as We Are Begging the Question: A Review of Graham Oppy's *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God*

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Abstract

Graham Oppy's *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* is easily the most comprehensive book available on the subject. After introducing the history of ontological arguments in the West, Oppy develops a comprehensive taxonomy of the same – rigorously formalizing and critiquing each argument in the process. Though he argues from an agnostic perspective in the context of modern Anglophone analytic philosophy and makes negligible reference to Islamic philosophy, his work is still most valuable to the Muslim reader. By tying Islamic philosophy (and specifically its own "ontological argument" – the burhan al-sidiqin) into the picture, said relevance to said Muslim reader becomes considerably more apparent.

Introduction

Very rarely does someone literally "write the book" on a subject. Yet Graham Oppy (1996) has done exactly this with Ontological Arguments and Belief in God. Despite presenting an agnostic perspective and only once briefly mentioning Islamic philosophy, this volume has much to offer the Muslim reader. Striking a rare balance between readability and technical precision, it gives not only Oppy's own insights and analysis, but also easily the most comprehensive review available of the then to-date literature. Oppy rejects ontological arguments as being irrelevant in a contemporary context. Unlike many, though, Oppy does not flippantly assert such; he devotes a whole book to arguing for it. Herein we wish to argue for the opposite conclusion, and in the process bring Islamic philosophy into the picture. We can only hope, though, that we can in so doing capture even but a bit of Oppy's brilliance.