IMMANUEL KANT'S CRITIQUE OF THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT: CHALLENGING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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Abstract

This study described Immanuel Kant's critique of the ontological argument, which he considered weak and flawed in proving the existence of God. Kant had been criticized by many philosophers who defended the ontological argument as soon as he put forward the critique of the ontological argument. Immanuel Kant argued against the analyticity of "exists" and its status as a real predicate. He criticized ontological arguments, highlighting the distinction between logical and ontological necessity. Kant rejected attempts to derive the existence of a supreme being from concepts, stating that existence transcended conceptual boundaries. While sensory objects could be known through our senses, the existence of pure reason or thought remained unknowable without a priori knowledge. Our awareness of existence pertained to the unity of experience, and any existence beyond it was an unjustifiable illusion. In this study, someone would not disclose the critique of Kant's critique of ontological argument.

Keywords: Immanuel Kant, Ontological Argument, Analytical-Synthetic Preposition, Real Predicate.

A. Introduction

The attempt to prove the existence of God is one of the important issues in philosophy that has been debated fervently from ancient times to the present day. Throughout history, philosophers and theologians have proposed various arguments or proofs in an attempt to provide evidence or rational justification for the existence of God. If we make a general distinction to prove the existence of God, we can divide it into three proofs. The first proof is the a posteriori proof. This proof is a proof that leads from the universe to God and is divided into cosmological and teleological arguments within itself. The cosmological argument is an a posteriori argument that appeals to the existence of the universe and its contingent nature. It suggests that the existence of the universe demands an explanation, and posits that God is the
necessary and sufficient cause of its existence. The argument often employs principles such as causality, contingency, and the impossibility of infinite regress.¹

Teleological Argument also known as the argument from design, the teleological argument posits that the order, complexity, and purposefulness observed in the natural world imply the existence of an intelligent designer. It highlights the apparent design and fine-tuning of the universe, biological organisms, and their intricate systems, suggesting that they could not have arisen by chance but rather through intentional design by a higher power.²

The second form of proof is the a priori proof. This proof is a type of argument that attempts to prove the existence of God independently of experiences and experiments. The representative of this proof is the ontological argument. The ontological argument seeks to prove God through deductive reasoning. It is an argument that reaches the conclusion that God exists through analytic, logical, and a priori premises. It attempts to explain God through the concepts of God, perfection, and necessary existence. This argument rests on the concept of God as a being greater than which nothing can be conceived. It posits that the very idea of a perfect or necessary being implies its existence, as existence is considered a greater attribute than non-existence.³

The third proof consists of arguments derived from the spiritual or inner realm of human beings. This argument has two forms: the religious experience argument and the moral argument. Religious Experience is an argument that draws on personal religious experiences as evidence for the existence of God. It claims that the profound and transformative nature of religious experiences, such as encounters with the divine or mystical states, provide direct or indirect evidence for the existence of a transcendent reality. The moral argument focuses on the existence of objective moral values and duties, asserting that the existence of an ultimate moral lawgiver, or God, provides the most plausible explanation for their existence. It argues that the

² Adams, R. M. The logical structure of Anselm's arguments. 28-54.
foundation of moral values cannot be adequately accounted for without invoking a transcendent source.⁴

However, it would be more appropriate to separate the moral argument from the religious experience argument, as the moral argument is not only concerned with the spiritual states of individuals but also with their social dimension, albeit indirectly. After providing a brief explanation of cosmological, teleological, religious experience, moral argument, and ontological argument, this article will focus solely on the ontological argument. This is because the ontological argument serves as a foundational argument for the cosmological and teleological arguments. In this article, after presenting the historical background of the ontological argument, we will examine Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) critique of the ontological argument.

B. Method

This research employs a qualitative methodology to investigate and analyze Immanuel Kant's views on ontological arguments related to the existence of God. The qualitative approach enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of Kant's thoughts through the interpretation of texts and their contexts. The focus of this approach lies in collecting textual data, followed by in-depth analysis through interpretation. One of the qualitative approaches utilized in this study is content analysis. By employing content analysis, researchers can systematically analyze texts and identify emerging themes or concepts within Kant's thinking regarding ontological arguments.

In this context, content analysis is employed to identify arguments, key concepts, and Kant's explanations concerning the existence of God in ontological arguments.⁵ In his work "Critique of Pure Reason" (1781), Immanuel Kant criticizes the ontological arguments put forth by philosophers such as Anselm of Canterbury and René Descartes. Kant argues that ontological arguments attempting to prove the existence of God are based on premises that are logically untenable.⁶ He asserts that

ontological arguments fail to convince logically because they presuppose that existence is a prerequisite for God's perfection.⁷ According to Kant, God's perfection cannot be inferred solely from conceptual ideas. Existence is not a predicate that can be logically attributed to the conceptual notion of God.⁸

In addition to content analysis, this research also employs another qualitative approach, namely discourse analysis. Discourse analysis aids in understanding how Kant utilizes specific language and words to elucidate his ontological arguments. This approach assists researchers in examining the context and meaning embedded within Kant's texts, as well as how his views develop in tandem with philosophical debates of his time.⁹ The choice of a qualitative approach in this study is driven by its capacity to delve into Kant's thoughts on ontological arguments concerning the existence of God. This approach enables researchers to comprehend the context, interpretation, and potential divergences within Kant's works. However, it is crucial to remember that qualitative approaches have limitations, such as subjective interpretation and methodological constraints.

C. Result and Discussion

The Ontological Argument

The ontological argument is defined as follows: "Ontological arguments are arguments, for the conclusion that God exists, from premises which are supposed to derive from some source other than observation of the world—e.g., from reason alone. In other words, ontological arguments are arguments from what are typically alleged to be none but analytic, a priori and necessary premises to the conclusion that God exists".¹⁰ Thus, the ontological argument is a type of argument that aims to prove the existence of God based on premises derived from a source other than observation of the world (such as reason or logic) and relies solely on analytic, a priori, and necessary premises to reach the conclusion of God's existence.

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⁷ Malcolm, N. Anselm's ontological arguments. 41-62
The ontological argument was first formulated by Saint Anselm (1033-1109) and is the most well-known and widespread view in the history of philosophy. In the tradition of Islamic philosophy, there are also opinions suggesting that the ontological argument was initiated by Farabi (870-950) and Ibn Sina (980-1037). However, upon careful examination of the arguments put forth by Farabi and Ibn Sina, it would be more accurate to describe them as cosmological proofs rather than ontological ones. According to Davidson (1917-2003), Ibn Sina did not present an a priori or ontological proof for the existence of God; his metaphysical proof should be seen as a new form of the cosmological proof.

In his work named Proslogion, Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) claims to reach the conclusion of God's existence through the concept of a being than which a greater cannot be conceived. The fundamental idea of this argument is that, based on the understanding of God's nature—for example, that God is a being of which a more perfect being cannot be conceived—it can be demonstrated that God exists. If God were only a concept, then a being that actually exists and is more perfect than God could be conceived, since actual existence is more perfect than existence solely in the mind. However, this leads to a contradiction: By definition, God is a being than which a greater cannot be conceived. Therefore, God must exist both in conception and in reality. As expressed by Leibniz, for God to be possible, He must necessarily exist. Thus, our understanding of His essence (whatness) is sufficient for us to know His existence a priori.

Anselm's argument can be expressed in the following formulated version:
1. People have the concept of the greatest possible being (God).
2. Let us assume that the greatest possible being (God) exists only as an idea in the mind.
3. Actual existence is greater than existence solely in the mind.

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4. Therefore, we can conceive of a being greater than the greatest possible being, that is, a being that actually exists.

5. However, there cannot be a being greater than the greatest possible being.

6. Therefore, the greatest possible being must actually exist.\(^{15}\)

Indeed, Anselm’s ontological argument appears to be another form of an argument that attempts to prove God’s existence through intuition. As soon as Anselm presented the ontological proof, the first objection came from Gaunilo, who lived in the same era. Gaunilo attempted to refute Anselm’s argument with his famous analogy known as the "Lost Island." According to Gaunilo, people can imagine an island that is greater, richer, and more beautiful than any known islands. They believe that this imagined island is more perfect than any actually existing islands. However, if this island exists only in the mind and not in reality, it leads people into a contradiction. Therefore, according to Gaunilo, such an idea of the most perfect island could be nothing more than a joke.\(^{16}\)

In later times, Gaunilo’s "Lost Island" idea is criticized by Descartes and Alvin Plantinga. According to Descartes, there is no similarity between the perfection attributed to an island and divine perfection. As Descartes points out, a being with no potentiality (potential) is an actual infinite perfection. However, the perfection that can be attributed to an island is not like that.\(^{17}\) On the other hand, Plantinga argues that the idea of a "greatest conceivable island" is not coherent. This is because an island is one of the things found in nature. For example, consider a number in nature. No matter how large a number is, it is always possible to add another number to it (+1). Similarly, it is possible to add a tree or some grains of sand to an island. However, it is not possible to add such additions to the perfection of God.\(^{18}\) Kant himself will also accept many mathematical propositions, such as "There is a prime number between 17 and 20," and consider them to be true. Such a proposition is an existential proposition.

\(^{15}\) Acar, Rahim (2017). *Akıl ve İnanç Din Felsefesine Giriş*. İstanbul: Kürê Yayınları. p. 131

\(^{16}\) Recep Kılıç, Mehmet Sait Reçber. *Din Felsefesi El Kitabı*. p. 125

\(^{17}\) Recep Kılıç, Mehmet Sait Reçber. *Din Felsefesi El Kitabı*. p. 125

\(^{18}\) Recep Kılıç, Mehmet Sait Reçber. *Din Felsefesi El Kitabı*. p. 126
Descartes portrays God as an actual and infinite perfection that does not contain any potentiality (potential). According to Descartes, the existence of God cannot be separated from His essence (that is, from the "idea of God"). Just as the "essence of a triangle" cannot be separated from the fact that it has three angles that are equal to two right angles, or the "idea of a mountain" cannot be thought of separately from the "idea of a valley," in the same way, existence cannot be separated from the essence of God.

According to Descartes, to think that God does not exist is equivalent to thinking that a valley can exist without a mountain. In other words, while there is a distinction between essence and existence in all other beings apart from God, in the case of God, there is no distinction between essence and existence. The existence and essence of God are identical. At the same time, God is a necessary being. Due to His essence, His existence is necessary. God is the only and unique being whose existence is necessary by His very nature.

Descartes' definition of God differs from Anselm's definition of God. Instead of "a being than which no greater can be conceived," Descartes defines God as "the most perfect being." Due to being a perfect entity, the nonexistence of God is inconceivable. The quality of existence is, in fact, a necessary attribute of perfection. To say "God does not exist" would be equivalent to saying "Existence does not exist," and this statement is devoid of meaning.

Norman Malcolm (1911-1990) is one of the contemporary philosophers who defended the ontological argument. According to Malcolm, the notion that "existence" is not a predicate for contingent (possible) beings does not lead to the conclusion that "necessary existence" is not a genuine predicate/attribute for God (this criticism is directed against Kant's claim that the predicate "exists" is not a real predicate). While Malcolm rejects the idea that "existence" is a perfection, he believes that Anselm's claim should essentially be understood as asserting that "necessary existence" is a perfection. This is because the concept of existence or nonexistence in a contingent sense is invalid when it comes to God. Contingent existence
(possibility) is a type of existence that can be conceived as both existing and not existing, thereby being contingent upon a cause. However, this cannot apply to God. Therefore, if God, who is "a being than which no greater can be conceived," does not exist, He cannot come into existence later. Otherwise, God's existence would be dependent on a cause, which would limit Him and render Him a non-necessary being. In other words, if God does not exist, He cannot come into existence subsequently. Likewise, God's existence cannot be brought to an end. Therefore, if God exists, His existence is necessary. Hence, the only way to refute Anselm's argument, according to Malcolm, is to demonstrate that the existence of God is impossible. This can only be achieved by showing that the concept of God is inherently inconsistent (contradictory), similar to a "round square." When we consider that the concept of God is not inconsistent, it leads to the conclusion that God necessarily exists. Consequently, just like the divine attributes, the attribute of "necessary existence" is an essential attribute of God.

"The doctrine that existence is a perfection is remarkably queer. (...) A king might desire that his next chancellor should have knowledge, wit, and resolution; but it is ludicrous to add that the king's desire is to have a chancellor who exists. Suppose that two royal councilors, A and B, were asked to draw up separately descriptions of the most perfect chancellor they could conceive, and that the descriptions they produced were identical except that A included existence in his list of attributes of a perfect chancellor and B did not. (I do not mean that B put nonexistence in his list.) One and the same person could satisfy both descriptions. More to the point, any person who satisfied A's description would necessarily satisfy B's description and vice versa! This is to say that A and B did not produce descriptions that differed in any way but rather one and the same description of necessary and desirable qualities in a chancellor. A only made a show of putting down a desirable quality that B had failed to include."

Alvin Plantinga (born 1932), on the other hand, bases his defense of the ontological argument on the application of the qualities of "maximum greatness" and "maximum perfection" to the semantics of "possible worlds." According to Plantinga, we can conceive the concept of "maximum greatness" as a quality of

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being "greater than which nothing can be conceived," and we can consider maximum perfection as a necessary consequence of this quality. Accordingly, a being possessing the quality of maximum greatness would be a "being having maximum perfection in all possible worlds." The quality of maximum perfection entails "omniscience, omnipotence, and moral excellence." Plantinga argues that this formulation of the ontological proof differs from approaches that view the necessary being as perfection (Plantinga, 1977, p. 108). Based on these intuitions, Plantinga formulates the ontological argument as follows: (1) There exists a possible world in which maximum greatness is instantiated. (2) In order for a being to have maximum greatness, it must have maximum perfection in every world. (3) In order for a being to have maximum perfection in every world, it must possess qualities such as omniscience, omnipotence, and moral excellence in every world.23

According to Plantinga, the first premise may not be accepted as true by everyone. However, even so, accepting the first premise is a very reasonable thing to do. Since maximum perfection entails qualities such as omniscience, omnipotence, and moral excellence, only God can possess such perfection. In other words, there is no being in the possible world(s) that possesses such maximum perfection.

Charles Hartshorne agrees with critics of Anselm in the following sense: Existence cannot always be taken as an attribute. However, this does not imply that existence can never be an attribute. While existence itself is not an attribute, necessary existence is an attribute. As a result, considering any two objects, if one of them exists necessarily and the other does not (i.e., it can both exist and not exist conditionally), the former is considered greater than the latter.

The conclusion that follows is that if the existence of God were contingent, then God would exist by chance or for some reason. Therefore, since God is the possible highest being, He possesses necessary existence. In that case, God's existence is either logically necessary or logically impossible.24 Since God's existence is not logically impossible, it is logically necessary. Indeed, it is evident that Hartshorne argues for the logical necessity of God's existence. However, to be logically necessary does not necessarily entail ontological existence. According to

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23 Recep Kılıç, Mehmet Sait Reçber. *Din Felsefesi El Kitabı*. P. 128
John Hick (1922-2012), Anselm was not referring to modern logical necessity but rather to ontological or factual necessity. Such a necessary being does not rely on any other entity for its existence; its existence is self-derived, neither coming into being nor ceasing to exist.  

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) argues that according to the proposition "God exists," if the concept of the subject (the concept of God) is understood, it will be seen that the predicate (exists) is contained within the subject. The concept of God is the concept of a being at the highest level of perfection (most perfect). Existence is a perfection. Therefore, existence is encompassed within the concept of God. In other words, existence belongs to the essence of God. Thus, God can be defined as a necessary being or a being that exists necessarily. Therefore, God must exist. Denying the existence of a necessary being is a contradiction. By analyzing and understanding the concept of God, we can conclude that God exists.

Critical Examination of Kant's Ontological Argument

Kant bases his critique of the ontological argument on the fundamental error that "existence cannot be treated as a predicate." According to him, in order to make a judgment about whether something exists or not, that entity needs to be verified through prior experience or evidence. In other words, to prove the existence of something, one must rely on empirical or sensory data.

According to Kant, speculative reason presents three types of proofs in the context of proving the existence of God: ontological, cosmological, and teleological. These philosophers attempting to prove the existence of God have not actually started from the existence of things; rather, they have based their proofs on judgments. The common characteristic of these proofs is that they attempt to prove God's existence based on the appearance of the world or empirical observations. However, according to Kant, the concept of absolute necessity belongs to pure reason, and it is not possible to establish the existence of absolute necessity through empirical means. Therefore, Kant concludes that the ontological argument is flawed.

References

26 Copleston, Frederick translated by Aziz Yardımlı (2004). Kant, Istanbul: İdea Yayınevi, p. 61
necessity by searching for it in the world or through experience.\textsuperscript{29} Immanuel Kant's fundamental idea in his critique of the ontological argument is as follows: It is not possible for something to ontologically exist based on any concept such as omniscience, omnipotence, or perfection. Kant focuses his criticism primarily on the ontological argument. He states that the other two arguments (cosmological and physicotheological) are grounded in the ontological argument.\textsuperscript{30}

Kant's criticisms of the ontological argument can be evaluated in two dimensions. Firstly, Kant questions whether the proposition "there is something" is an analytic statement or a synthetic statement. Analytic statements are expressions that carry the truth of their propositions through conceptual relations. Synthetic statements, on the other hand, carry the truth of their propositions through empirical or sensory-based relations. Secondly, Kant examines whether the predicate "is" in the statement "there is something" is a real predicate or not. A real predicate is a predicate that expresses a quality truly belonging to an object. Conversely, an unreal predicate is a predicate that expresses a quality not belonging to an object or does not express its existence. To understand Kant's notion of analytic and real predicates, it is helpful to provide some information about a few of Kant's fundamental philosophical views.\textsuperscript{31}

In order to understand Immanuel Kant's critique of the ontological arguments, it is necessary to first examine his philosophical framework. Kant aimed to establish limits to knowledge within his philosophical system. He criticized traditional metaphysics and developed a philosophical system that diverged from both rationalists and empiricists.

One can summarize this by referring to Kant's famous statement: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."\textsuperscript{32} Kant agrees with rationalists in accepting the importance of concepts. However, he departs from them by emphasizing the need for concrete intuitions in the formation of knowledge. Kant recognizes the role of empirical perceptions and does not

\textsuperscript{29} Kant, Immanuel. translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}. A592/B620

\textsuperscript{30} Kant, Immanuel. translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}. A638/B666

\textsuperscript{31} Kant, Immanuel. translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}. p.193-194 (B75/A51)
disregard them like empiricists do. However, he takes a different path from empiricists by acknowledging the a priori aspect of perception. Kant's philosophical approach can be seen as a synthesis that combines elements of rationalism and empiricism. He argues that both concepts and intuitions are necessary for the formation of knowledge. This unique perspective sets him apart from both rationalists and empiricists and forms the basis of his critique of the ontological arguments.

Kant considers a priori judgments and concrete intuitions as two essential conditions for the formation of knowledge. According to Kant, there are two fundamental forms of intuition: time and space. Time and space are a priori and serve as the necessary conditions for all perceptions, or in other words, "pure intuitions." For Kant, time and space are not derived from experience but are inherent structures of human cognition. They provide the framework within which our sensory experiences are organized and understood. Time is the form through which we perceive the succession of events, and space is the form through which we perceive the spatial relationships between objects. These pure intuitions of time and space make sensory experience and objective knowledge possible.

In Kant's philosophy, a priori judgments are synthetic, as they go beyond mere analysis of concepts and involve the combination of concepts with intuitions. These judgments provide the necessary conditions for our understanding of the world and serve as the basis for empirical knowledge. By emphasizing the role of a priori elements, such as time and space, Kant establishes the significance of both innate structures of cognition and empirical perceptions in the formation of knowledge.

Kant's other perspective is also concerned with categories. According to Kant, categories are not properties of existence, but rather properties of thought. In other words, what we refer to as categories is not an essential quality of existence, but an essential quality of the mind. These categories exist in the mind prior to experience. Categories are the governing laws of thought, and they include Quantity (universal, particular, and singular), Quality (affirmative, negative, and infinite), Relation (categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive), and Modality (problematic, assertoric,
Humans acquire knowledge through the use of categories. However, categories can only be applied in the phenomenal domain (accessible to our concrete senses) and cannot provide knowledge about the noumenal realm (knowable through pure reason). The mind can only make empirical use of a priori principles.

Kant distinguishes between positive noumenon and negative noumenon. Positive noumenon is defined as "an object of non-sensible intuition," while negative noumenon is "not an object of our sensible intuition." In other words, in the positive sense, noumenon refers to something knowable in a non-sensible manner, whereas in the negative sense, noumenon refers to something that cannot be known in a sensible way. Propositions about the unknowable/negative noumenon in a sensible sense are empty propositions that convey no meaning to us.

Kant’s distinction between analytic-synthetic and a priori-a posteriori is another key foundation of his criticisms towards theistic arguments. Analytic propositions are those in which the predicate is already implicitly contained in the subject. Analytic propositions do not expand our knowledge because they are empty in content. If analytic propositions explicitly show that the predicate is contained in the subject, then these propositions are tautological (empty) propositions. Nontautological analytic propositions can be clarified by analyzing the predicate. On the other hand, synthetic propositions are those in which the predicate is not contained in the subject, although it is related to the subject. Synthetic propositions are judgments that expand our knowledge.

For example: "All bachelors are unmarried" (analytic proposition). This is because the concept of being unmarried is already contained in the concept of bachelors. "All bachelors wear blue shirts" (synthetic proposition). This is because the concept of wearing blue shirts can be related to the concept of bachelors, but it is not a part of the concept of bachelors. It expands our knowledge about bachelors. By making these distinctions, Kant argues that a priori knowledge, which includes analytic

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propositions, cannot provide us with substantive knowledge about the existence of God or other metaphysical claims. He emphasizes the importance of a posteriori knowledge, which includes synthetic propositions based on empirical experience, in expanding our understanding of the world.

A priori propositions are independent of experience (they should possess universality and necessity). A posteriori propositions, on the other hand, are judgments acquired through experience. Mathematical propositions or judgments serve as a prime example of a priori propositions. However, because necessity and analyticity do not always coincide, mathematical propositions are synthetic (synthetic a priori propositions).

For example: \( 13 + 20 = 23 \). Here, we cannot claim that 23 is contained within 13 + 20. If we attempt to conceptually analyze the number 23, it is not possible to arrive at the sum of 13 + 20. Based on the above information, we can categorize analytic and synthetic propositions into four types: analytic a priori, analytic a posteriori, synthetic a priori, and synthetic a posteriori (which must involve empirical content).

According to Kant, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics contain synthetic a priori propositions. In synthetic a priori propositions, there is a "third element" (experience) that relates the subject and predicate. ³⁶ Therefore, Kant argues that for metaphysics to fulfill its claim of secure knowledge, it must involve synthetic a priori judgments that incorporate this "third element". However, Kant criticizes all metaphysical/theistic arguments, including the ontological argument, because they fail to fulfill the requirement of making synthetic a priori judgments with the inclusion of the "third element" as seen in the history of metaphysical judgments and arguments.

No Claim of "Existence" Can Be Analytic

Kant's fundamental claim is as follows: The real existence of something cannot be derived from the conceptual analysis of that thing. We can only determine whether something actually exists or not through experience, based on the concepts we conceive. If we cannot determine it, it means that the propositions containing

negative numen are empty for us. In other words, it means that we do not assert that something actually exists beyond the conceptual realm by starting from existing concepts. The concept of necessary existence in the theistic tradition is a concept of pure reason, an a priori concept. It is not possible to prove the objective reality of this concept (necessary existence).

According to Kant, all propositions in geometry, such as the proposition "A triangle has three angles," are absolutely necessary. However, this necessity is not ontological in nature; rather, it is a necessity derived from the propositions themselves. It is a logical necessity. The absolute necessity of propositions is not equivalent to the absolute necessity of objects. The absolute necessity of propositions is merely a conditional necessity of objects or solely a predicate of the proposition. In other words, the absolute necessity of the existence of three angles is contingent upon the existence of a triangle. If a triangle exists, then three angles necessarily exist. However, stating that if a triangle exists, then there is three-angledness does not imply the existence of a triangle.

“The unconditioned necessity of judgments, however, is not an absolute necessity of things. For the absolute necessity of the judgment is only a conditioned necessity of the thing, or of the predicate in the judgment. The above proposition does not say that three angles are absolutely necessary, but rather that under the condition that a triangle exists (is given), three angles also exist (in it) necessarily.”

Based on the example of a triangle, Kant argues that in an analytic proposition (where the predicate is already implicitly contained in the subject), denying the predicate without denying the subject can lead to a contradiction. However, it is consistent to deny both the subject and the predicate. For instance, accepting the existence of a triangle while denying its three angles would be contradictory, whereas denying both the triangle and its three angles would resolve the contradiction. The same principle applies to the proposition "God is omnipotent." If we accept the concept of God but deny "omnipotent," it leads to a contradiction. However, denying both God and all His attributes would be consistent.

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Kant argues that from the proposition "God exists," we can draw two conclusions: either such propositions become tautological in the sense of being analytic statements, or they are synthetic statements regarding the concept of "existence." In the case of synthetic statements, denying the predicate does not lead to a contradiction because the predicate is not contained within the subject. The proposition "God exists" is either a tautological statement or a synthetic proposition in which stating "God does not exist" does not result in a contradiction. But if you say, God is not, then neither omnipotence nor any other of his predicates is given; for they are all cancelled together with the subject, and in this thought not the least contradiction shows itself.38

The Concept of 'Existence' Is not A Genuine Predicate

Kant argues that the term "exists" used in the proposition "God exists" is not a real or determinative predicate; in fact, it is not a predicate at all but merely a copula. When we think of something as existing in our minds, we cannot make claims about its ontological (actual) existence. For example, when a person thinks "God exists," they assert that God ontologically exists. However, this raises a problem: If it is possible to think of God, then we can also claim that a pink-colored flying horse (unicorn) is possible to think of and assert its ontological existence. However, in reality (ontologically), such a horse does not exist.

Kant examines the nature of the term "exists" when used as a predicate. According to Kant, the term "exists" is merely a copula in the context of a proposition. Therefore, it lacks any determinations and cannot be considered as knowledge.

"Being is obviously not a real predicate, i.e., a concept of something that could add to the concept of a thing. It is merely the positing" of a thing or of certain determinations in themselves. In the logical use it is merely the copula of a judgment. The proposition God is omnipotent contains two concepts that have their objects: God and omnipotence; the little word “is” is not a predicate in it, but only that which posits the predicate in relation to the subject. Now if! take the subject (God) together with all his predicates (among which omnipotence belongs), and say God is, or there is a God, then I add no new predicate to the concept of God, but

only posit the subject in itself with all its predicates, and indeed posit the object in relation to my concept. Both must contain exactly the same, and hence when I think this object as given absolutely (through the expression, “it is”), nothing is thereby added to the concept, which expresses merely its possibility. Thus the actual contains nothing more than the merely possible.\(^{39}\)

The proposition "God is omnipotent" contains two concepts, each having its own object - God and omnipotence. The word "-is" does not introduce any new predicate. Instead, it serves to connect the predicate to the subject in terms of assumption. Now, if we take the subject (God) along with all its predicates (including omnipotence) and say "God is" or "There is a God," we do not add any predicate to the concept of God. We merely assume the subject in relation to all its predicates.\(^{40}\)

When I say "I have one thousand liras," it does not prove the actual existence of one thousand liras. Similarly, when I say "God exists," it does not prove the existence of God.\(^{41}\)

According to Kant, a real predicate is any predicate that adds something to the concept of the subject, expanding upon it. In other words, for a predicate to be real, it must go beyond what is merely stated about the subject. Anything one likes can serve as a logical predicate, even the subject can be predicated of itself; for logic abstracts from every content. But the determination is a predicate, which goes beyond the concept of the subject and enlarges it. Thus it must not be included in it already.\(^{42}\) In the example "Triangles have three angles," the predicate "have three angles" does not go beyond the concept of "triangle." Therefore, it is a tautological statement. However, when we say "Cakes are triangles," the predicate "are triangles" is a real predicate because it expands our knowledge about cakes. It determines that cakes have a triangular shape. In the proposition "God exists," the predicate "exists" is not a real predicate because it does not expand our knowledge about God. The term "exists" in this context can only be a tautology.


D. Conclusion

Immanuel Kant's view is that no claim of "exists" can be analytic and that "exists" is not a real predicate. Kant argues that concepts do not expand our minds to new objects but rather limit objects to concepts. However, ontological arguments claim that concepts expand to objects. Kant sees ontological arguments as inconsistent and argues that logical necessity is not the same as ontological necessity. Another point of criticism by Kant is that if we reject only the predicate without rejecting the subject in an identical proposition, then it leads to contradiction. However, if we reject both the subject and the predicate, the contradiction is eliminated. According to Kant, all efforts and endeavours in famous ontological proofs that attempt to derive the existence of a supreme being from concepts are in vain. For Kant, the concept of existence cannot be an analytic proposition and does not possess a real predicate. Therefore, according to Kant, if we are to ascribe existence to an object, we must go beyond its conceptual realm. When it comes to the objects of the senses, this can only be achieved through our senses. However, in the case of pure reason or pure thought, there is no way to know their existence because it would require entirely a priori knowledge. But our consciousness of existence as a whole (whether through immediate perception or through inferences that connect perceptions) belongs entirely to the unity of experience. Any existence beyond this realm is a mere illusion that we cannot justify in any way.

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