

# Three Objections to Anselm's Ontological Argument

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# 1. Is God Thinkable or Conceivable?

*“The Faithful say that God knows absolutely everything, and that there are no limits to what he can do. [However,] if God knows everything, then nobody could construct a box so that God doesn't know what it contains, whereas if there were no limits to what God can do, then he could construct a box so that nobody knows what it contains.”*

Bill Wallace – From the 'Discussion Forum' on Richard Dawkins' website.

This observation suggests that the concept of God is hard for us humans to conceive, grasp and understand. If so, Anselm's argument which presupposes an understanding of the concept of God is in trouble.

## 2. Gaunilo's Objection

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Consider the Perfect Island (=an island than which no greater / better island can be conceived).

Following Anselm's reasoning, it follows that a *non-existent* Perfect Island would be less perfect than an *existent* Perfect Island.

So, the Perfect Island must exist. (*Absurd!*)

*Since this admittedly absurd piece of reasoning mirrors Anselm's proof of God's existence, Anselm's proof must be absurd, as well.*

# How Did Anselm Respond to Gaunilo?

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Anselm's proof only applies to the being than which nothing greater can be conceived, not to any being.

# 3. Kant's Objection

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Existence is not a predicate, such as red, tall, short, etc.

*A hundred existent coins do not contain a coin more than a hundred mere possible coins. As the latter signify the **concept in the mind**, and the former the **real object** ..., should the former contain more than the latter, my concept would not, in the latter case, express the whole object, and would not therefore be an adequate concept . . . **the conceived hundred coins are not themselves increased through acquiring existence outside my concept.***