

## William Rowe's View on The Ontological Argument and the Fallacy of Begging the Question

Farah Ramin<sup>1</sup> 

1. Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, University of Qom, Qom, Iran.  
Email: [f.ramin@qom.ac.ir](mailto:f.ramin@qom.ac.ir)

### Abstract

This paper has two objectives: first, to provide an explanation and analysis of Anselm and Plantinga's ontological argument based on the interpretation of William Rowe, a contemporary atheist, and second, to determine the place of the fallacy of "begging the question" in this argument. After presenting the criticisms of Anselm's interpretation of the argument, Rowe considers Plantinga's modal version to be the most convincing version of the argument and believes that previous interpretations, based on the principle that "existence in reality" is a superior property, are caught in a logical fallacy. Plantinga's interpretation is also based on the premise that God is "a possible being with maximum perfection," and this proposition is true only if God exists in the real world. In this research, using an analytical-critical method, I show that Anselm's interpretation and Plantinga's reconstruction of it are fallacious, and although Plantinga's modal interpretation has logical necessity, it does not prove the necessity of God's existence in the external world. This is because perfection in this argument is defined in a way that falls into the fallacy of "begging the question".

**Keywords:** Ontological Argument, Anselm, Plantinga, William Rowe, Fallacy of Begging the Question, Modal Interpretation, Perfection.

### Introduction

In this research, we aim to demonstrate analytically and critically that Anselm's account and the reconstruction of this account by Plantinga are fallacious. Although Plantinga's modal account has logical necessity, it does not prove the existence of God beyond, and the perfection defined in this argument is still susceptible to the fallacy of "begging the question." The focus of this article is on the question of whether the ontological arguments are fallacious.

Perhaps it is better to consider the ontological argument not as a single argument with different interpretations, but rather as a collection of arguments, each of which, based on the concept of God, attempts to prove the instantiation of this concept in the external reality. This paper pursues two objectives: firstly, to present an explanatory and analytical interpretation of the Anselm and Plantinga's ontological arguments based on the perspective of contemporary atheist William Rowe, and secondly, to determine the place of the fallacy of "begging the question" in these arguments. After raising criticisms against Anselm's interpretation in this argument, Plantinga's theistic account is considered the most convincing argument and believed to be free from logical fallacies. The author argues that

previous interpretations, relying on the principle that "existence in reality" is a superior characteristic, fall into logical fallacies. Plantinga's argument is also based on the premise that God is "a possible being with maximal perfection," and this proposition is only true if God exists in the actual world.

### Research Findings

William Rowe considers Plantinga's ontological argument as the best and most convincing account. However, his argument, like Anselm's argument, involves the fallacy of "begging the question." In this argument, God can be a possible being only if there exists an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect being in every possible world. To know that God is a possible being, we must know in advance that a being with such qualities exists in the actual world; otherwise, Plantinga's introduced God would not exist. Evaluating Plantinga's ontological argument, we conclude that while this argument has a logically sound structure, the logical necessity does not necessitate the necessity of existence, and the argument within this modal account is fallacious as well; because the perfection, as defined in the argument, assumes perfection attributes for God from the beginning and makes God's existence a consequence of His activity. His activity, in turn, is contingent upon the supreme excellence, and this excellence is dependent on the existence of the pinnacle of perfection. It seems that Plantinga himself is aware of the weakness of his argument. He claims that this argument relies not on the truth of theism but on the reasonableness of accepting God. Plantinga, in his reformed epistemology, considers belief in God as fundamental beliefs that are independent of arguments.

### Conclusion

This research has clearly revealed that ontological arguments, even in the modal interpretation of Plantinga, fall into the fallacy of "begging the question." Such flaws in this category of arguments withhold them from establishing a compelling proof and, consequently, ontological arguments do not serve as a convincing means to prove the existence of God and do not play a fundamental role in strengthening faith.

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