Anselm's Ontological Argument

Three Propositional Attitudes

Theism
   Belief in P

Atheism
   Disbelief in P

Agnosticism

   Withholding judgment about P

P = "God exists."

Three Philosophical Attitudes

Philosophical Theism
   The view that P can be proven

Philosophical Atheism
   The view that P can be disproven

Philosophical Agnosticism
   The view that P can be neither proven nor disproven

Proofs, Arguments, and Evidence

An **argument** is a set of statements; one of which is the conclusion and the rest are premises; the premises are better known than the conclusion and, if true, give us reason to believe the conclusion.

Arguments are either **deductive** or **inductive**.

A deductive argument is **valid** if true premises guarantee a true conclusion.

An inductive argument is **strong** if true premises make the conclusion more likely true than false.

Evidence for P gives us some reason for believing P (although it might be an insufficient reason).

A **proof** is often used to mean a deductive argument that is valid and has all true premises, thus guaranteeing the truth of the conclusion.

Proving God's Existence

A priori proofs [ontological]

    All of the premises can be known prior to experience.

A posteriori proofs [cosmological, teleological/design]

    At least one premise is based on experience.

Proofs of God's Existence

Ontological

    The meaning of the word 'God' includes existence.

Cosmological

    The existence of the world requires a creator.

Teleological/Design

    The purpose/design of the world requires a designer.

Anselm's Idea of God

God is that being than which none greater can be conceived.
I think.

Anselm (1033-1109)

Ways of Existing

	in intellectu	*in re*
physical things	sensations and thoughts of …	stones, brains, animals, unicorns
non-physical things	thoughts of…	numbers, sensations and thoughts, minds, God?

In intellectu: in the understanding

In re: outside the understanding

Moving from Thought to Being

In intellectu existence   (… implies …)   *In re* existence

(1) Sensation/thought of X.   The **real correlate** of the sensation or thought.
(2) Sensation of X.   The **real archetype** of X.
(3) Thought of X.   The necessary non-existence of the **real archetype** of X.
(4) Thought of X.   The necessary existence of the **real archetype** of X.

Real Correlate: this is the real basis of the sensation or thought e.g., as a property of the brain, or of the immaterial soul)

Real Archetype: this is the real thing of which the sensation or thought is a sign, e.g., a visual image of a cow has a cow as its real archetype.

Example of (3): A square-circle. From the thought of a square-circle, we can infer the non-existence of the real archetype (the square circle)

Example of (4): God. This is what Anselm is attempting in his argument. From the thought of God, we can infer the existence of God.

Anselm's 1ˢᵗ Proof

(1) God is the most perfect being conceivable.   [by definition]

(2) God does not exist *in re*.   [assumption for the IP]

(3) To exist *in re* is to be more perfect than not to exist *in re*.

(4) It's possible to conceive of a being with all of God's properties, plus existence
    in re.

(5) ∴ It's possible to conceive of a being more perfect than God.   [2, 3, 4]

(6) But it's *not* possible to conceive of a being more perfect than God.   [by def.]

(7) ∴ (2) is false, i.e. God exists *in re*.   [5, 6, 2-IP]

Guanilo's Counter-example

(1) Insulissima is the most perfect island conceivable.   [by definition]

(2) Insulissima does not exist *in re*.   [assumption for the IP]

(3) To exist *in re* is to be more perfect than not to exist *in re*.

(4) It's possible to conceive of an island with all of Insulissima's properties, plus existence *in re*.

(5) ∴ It's possible to conceive of an island more perfect than Insulissima .   [2-4]

(6) But it's *not* possible to conceive of an island more perfect than Insulissima .

(7) ∴ (2) is false, i.e. Insulissima exists *in re*.   [5, 6, 2-IP]

Anselm's 1ˢᵗ Proof

(short version)

(1) The concept 'God' includes all perfections.   [by definition]

(2) Existence *in re* is a perfection.

(3) ∴ God exists *in re*.   [1, 2]

Anselm's 2nd Proof

(1) God is the most perfect being conceivable.   [by definition]

(2) God can be conceived not to exist *in re*.   [assumption for the IP]

(3) A thing whose *in re* non-existence cannot be conceived is more perfect than one whose *in re* non-existence can be conceived.

(4) It's possible to conceive of a being whose *in re* non-existence cannot be conceived.

(5) ∴ It's possible to conceive of a being more perfect than God.   [2, 3, 4]

(6) But it's *not* possible to conceive of a being more perfect than God.   [by def.]

(7) ∴ (2) is false, i.e. God's non-existence cannot be conceived, i.e., God necessarily exists *in re*.   [5, 6, 2-IP]

Anselm's 2ⁿᵈ Proof

(A shorter version)

(1) God is a necessary being.   [implied by the definition]

(2) It is possible that God exists *in re*.   [cf. pr. 4 in the long proof]

(3) ∴ God exists *in re*.   [1, 2]

Criticisms: 1ˢᵗ Proof

Problems with Premises (3) and (4):

(3) To exist *in re* is to be more perfect than not to exist *in re*.

- Is existence a perfection or "great-making" property?
- Is existence a property at all?

(4) It's possible to conceive of a being with all of God's properties, plus existence *in re*.

- Can I conceive of God completely?
- Can I be certain that what I am conceiving is possible?

Criticisms: 2ⁿᵈ Proof

Problems with Premises (3) and (4):

(3) A thing whose *in re* non-existence cannot be conceived is more perfect than one whose *in re* non-existence can be conceived.

  • (This does not assume that existence is a property.)

(4) It's possible to conceive of a being whose *in re* non-existence cannot be conceived.

  • 'Possible' is ambiguous between "I'm not sure/can't decide if P is true" and "P is possibly true."

Necessity (and contingency)

Logical: It is impossible to conceive of X not existing [necessarily true = true by definition]

Ontological/Metaphysical: X is self-existent; *if* X exists, then X exists necessarily.

Physical/Empirical/Hypothetical: Given the conditions in the actual world, X has to exist or happen. [necessary = actual]

Modality
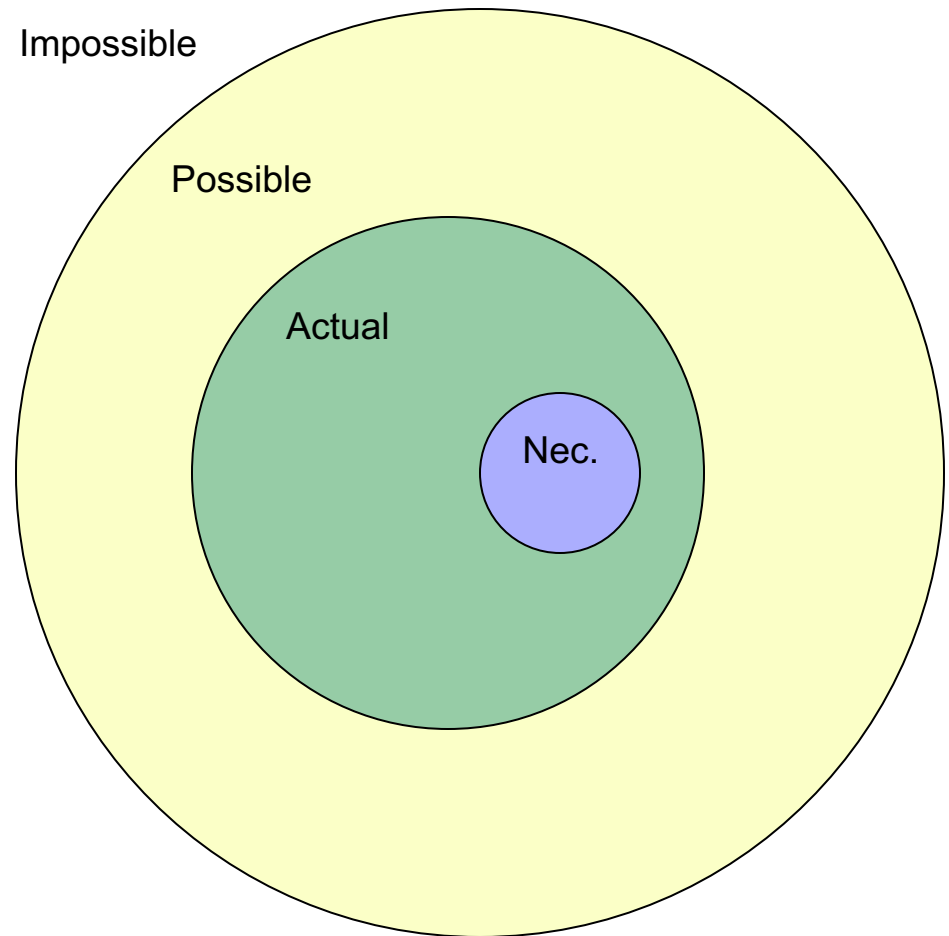
Modality refers to the quality of being:

- Necessary,

- Actual, or

- Possible.

Also included are the :

- Non-actual (= possible, but not actual)

- Contingent (= possible, but not necessary)

- Impossible (= necessary non-actual)
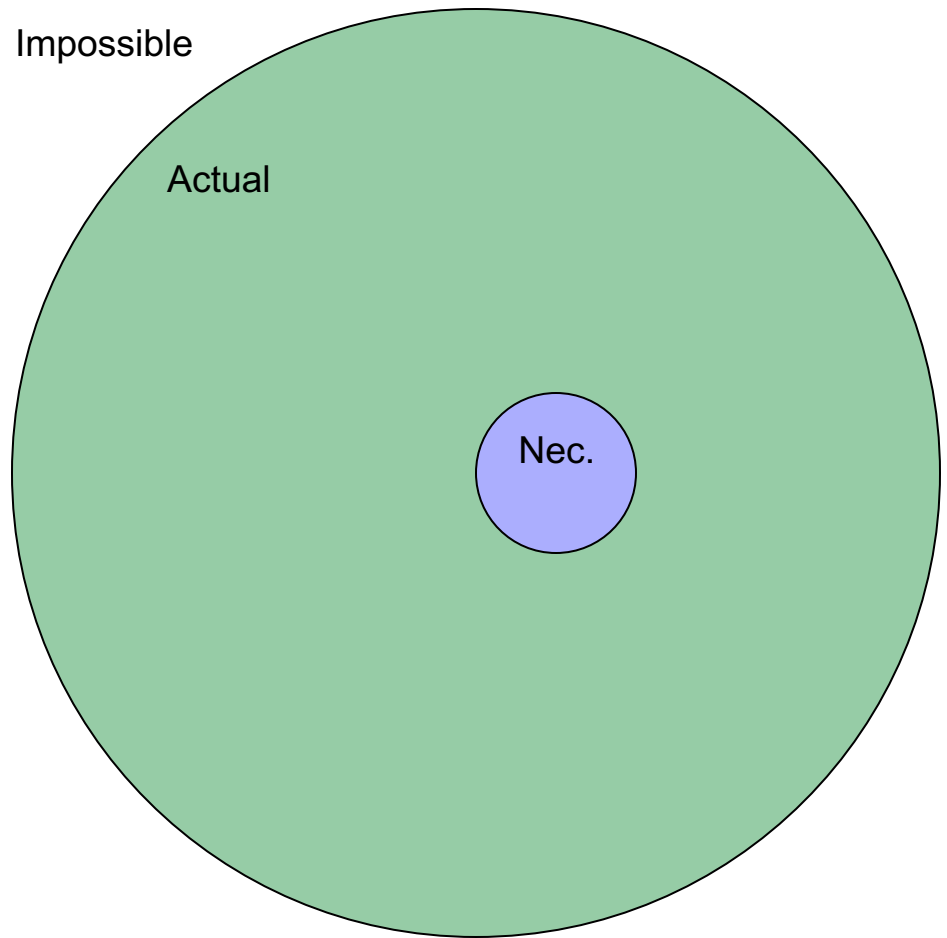
Modality

- Necessary,
- Actual, or
- Possible.
- Non-necessary
- Non-actual
    (= possible,
    but not actual)
- Contingent (=
    actual, but not
    necessary)
- Impossible

Modality

What if the actual and the possible were the same?

Modality

Would this mean that everything that did exist, had to exist — that is, that everything that is, is necessary?