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Selected Bibliography on the History of the Ontological Argument. General Works

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History of the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God

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General histories and introductory readings on the Ontological Argument (Current page)

Anselm of Canterbury's argument in the *Proslogion*

The Medieval Period from Gaunilo to Duns Scotus

The Modern Period from Suárez to Frege

The Contemporary Period from Barth to the Present Time

A Selection of Primary Texts

General Histories of the Ontological Argument

1. Bonansea, Bernardino. 1979. *God and Atheism. A Philosophical Approach to the Problem of God*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press.
See Chapter III. *The Ontological Argument* pp. 107-170.
2. Harrelson, Kevin J. 2009. *The Ontological Argument from Descartes to Hegel*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
Contents: Preface 9; List of Abbreviations 11; Introduction: an episode in the history of an argument 15; Chapter One: Proof and perception: the contest of the *Argumentum Cartesianum* 41; Chapter Two: Refutations of atheism: ontological arguments in English philosophy, 1652-1705 79; Chapter Three: Being and intuition: Malebranche's appropriation of the Argument 101; Chapter Four: An adequate conception: the argument in Spinoza's philosophy 121; Chapter Five: Ontological Arguments in Leibniz and the German Enlightenment 141; Chapter Six: Kant's systematic critique of the Ontological Argument 167; Chapter Seven: Hegel's reconstruction of the Argument 197; Glossary of terms, arguments, and positions 231; Bibliography 235; Index 249-253.
"This book provides a philosophical analysis of the several debates concerning the "ontological argument" from the middle of the seventeenth to the beginning of nineteenth century. My aim in writing it was twofold. First, I wished to provide a

detailed and comprehensive account of the history of these debates, which I perceived to be lacking in the scholarly literature. Second, I wanted also to pursue a more philosophically interesting question concerning the apparent unassailability of ontological arguments. In pursuit of this latter problem, the driving question that my account addresses is "why has this argument, or kind of argument, been such a constant in otherwise diverse philosophical contexts and periods?"
As familiar as the ontological argument is, there have been no book- length studies in English about the historical development of the arguments of Anselm, Descartes, etc. A vast collection of articles and chapter-length treatments of the history of these arguments does exist, however; and in composing this work I have benefited from the labors of numerous scholars. Particularly helpful was the work of Bernardino Bonansea, Charles Hartshorne, Asnat Avshalom, and Oded Balabon. Even more influential were the many monograph-length studies that have long appeared in other Western languages, especially in German and French. In conducting the necessary research I accrued an enormous debt to the authors of these texts. I thus owe my sincere gratitude to Wolfgang Röd, Louis Girard, and Jan Rohls. My greatest debt in this regard, however, is to Dieter Henrich. My work is little more than an extended argument with him." (From the Preface)

3. Matthews, Scott. 2001. *Reason, Community and Religious Tradition. Anselm's Argument and the Friars*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Contents: Preface; Introduction: Arguments, texts and contexts; Anselm and tradition; Encountering God within: Anselm's argument among the early Franciscans in Paris; Other ways to God: Anselm, the early Dominicans and the friars in Oxford; Bonaventure and the Franciscan community; Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican community; Contested traditions; Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.
"This book examines key questions about the relationship of rationality to its contexts by tracing the early history of the so-called 'ontological' argument. The book follows Anselm's *Proslogion* from its origins in the private, devotional context of an eleventh-century monastery to its reception in the public and adversarial contexts of the friars' schools in the thirteenth century. Using unpublished manuscript evidence from the Dominican and Franciscan schools at Oxford, Paris and Bologna in the thirteenth century, Matthews argues that the debate over Anselm's argument embodied the broader religious differences between the Franciscan and Dominican communities. By comparing the most famous figures of the period with their lesser-known contemporaries, Matthews argues that the Friars thought as communities and developed as traditions as they developed their arguments."

4. Chatillon, Jean. 1959. "De Guillaume d'Auxerre à saint Thomas d'Aquin: l'argument de Saint Anselme chez les premiers Scolastiques du XIII siècle." In *Spicilegium Beccense I. Congrés International du IX centenaire de l'arrivée d'Anselme au Bec*, 209-231. Paris: Vrin.

5. Piazza, Giovanni. 2000. *Il nome di Dio. Una storia della prova ontologica*. Bologna: Edizioni dello Studio Domenicano.

6. Scribano, Emanuela. 1994. *L'esistenza di Dio. Storia della prova ontologica da Descartes a Kant*. Bari: Laterza.
Traduction française par Charles Barone: *L'existence de Dieu. Histoire de la preuve ontologique de Descartes a Kant*, Paris: Seuil 2002.

7. Staglianò, Antonio. 1996. *La mente umana alla prova di Dio: filosofia e teologia nel dibattito contemporaneo sull'argomento di Anselmo d'Aosta*. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane.

8. Tomatis, Francesco. 1997. *L'argomento ontologico: l'esistenza di Dio da Anselmo a Schelling*. Roma: Città Nuova.

9. Daniels, Augustinus. 1909. *Quellenbeiträge und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Gottesbeweise im Dreizehnten Jahrundert, mit besonderer Beruchsichtigung des*

Arguments im Proslogion des Hl. Anselm, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*. Münster: Druck und verlag der Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung.
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10. Dyroff, Adolf. 1928. "Der ontologische Gottesbeweis des hl. Anselmus in der Scholastik." In *Probleme der Gotteserkenntnis*, 79-115. Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung.

11. Grunwald, Georg. 1907. *Geschichte der Gottesbeweise im Mittelalter bis zum Ausgang der Hochscholastik nach den Quellen Dargestellt*. Münster: Aschendorff.

12. Henrich, Dieter. 1960. *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis. Sein Problem und seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit*. Tübingen: Mohr.
Traduzione italiana di Sonia Carboncini: *La prova ontologica dell'esistenza di Dio. La sua problematica e la sua storia nell'età moderna*, Napoli, Prismi, 1983.

13. Rõd, Wolfgang. 2009. *Der Gott der reinen Vernunft. Ontologischer Gottesbeweis und rationalistische Philosophie*. München: Beck.
Nachdruck 2009: *Der Gott der reinen Vernunft. Ontologischer Gottesbeweis und rationalistische Philosophie*.

14. Rohls, Jan. 1987. *Theologie und Metaphysik. Der ontologische Gottesbeweis und seine Kritiker*. Gütersloher: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn.

15. Ceñal, Ramon. 1970. "El argumento ontologico de la existencia de Dios en la escolastica de los siglos 17 y 18." In *Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri. Tomo I*, 247-325. Madrid: Editorial Moneda y Crédito.

Introductory Studies on the Ontological Argument

1. Barnes, Jonathan. 1972. *The Ontological Argument* . London: Macmillan.
Contents: General Editor's Preface VII; Author's Preface VIII; 1. The Arguments 1; 2. Necessary Existence 29; 3. Existence and Predication 39; 4. 'God' 67; Appendix

A: Chronology of Anselm's Life 87; Appendix B: Anselm's *Reductio* 88; References 91-98.
"The Ontological Argument has been debated for eight centuries, and never more energetically than in the last decade. The present essay is less concerned to break new ground than to harrow land already ploughed. Thus Chapter 1 expounds, perhaps rather more particularly than is customary, some of the chief versions of the Ontological Argument; while Chapters 2-3 attempt to appraise and then to outflank the two main manoeuvres which opponents of the Argument have essayed. Finally, Chapter 4 outlines and advocates a more elementary plan of attack.
My goal has been to state, as plainly as I can, what the Ontological Argument is, and what is and is not most wrong with it. But I have tried to keep in mind a secondary objective, and to provide some intimation of a few of the wider philosophical issues which the Argument raises. For even those philosophers who are sceptical of the merits of the Argument itself must allow that it has inspired and stimulated some considerable work in philosophical logic, and that it still offers a pointed introduction to a number of peculiarly recalcitrant problems.
The literature on the Ontological Argument is of daunting magnitude, and it swells almost daily: I am acutely conscious of broad *lacunae* in my reading, especially of the more theologically inclined matter. Nevertheless, my debts to the published thoughts of others are frequent and heavy; I have tried to acknowledge the most important in the text." (P. VIII)

2. Bastit, Michel. 2016. *Le principe du monde. Le Dieu du philosophe* . Paris: Les Press universitaires de l'IPC.
Table des matières : Introduction : À la recherche du principe 7; Chapitre 1: Des traditions religieuses à la philosophie 13; Chapitre 2: Persuasion et démonstration 29; Chapitre 3: De la pensée à la pensée ou de la pensée à l'existence ? 47; Chapitre 4: Commencement et fin 63; Chapitre 5: Le concert des sciences 85; Chapitre 6: Survie des substances dans l'espace-temps 107; Chapitre 7: Les mouvements des corps mobiles 135; Chapitre 8: Le temps des mouvements 147; Chapitre 9: Limites et unicité du monde 157; Chapitre 10: Les causes 171; Chapitre 11: La Cause Première 199; Chapitre 12: Éléments principaux de théologie naturelle 217; Conclusion 237; Bibliographie 243-258.
"Cet ouvrage est un livre de philosophie première, et particulièrement de théologie naturelle. Il a pour objet l'établissement de l'existence d'un principe premier de la réalité qui pourra peut-être par la suite être identifié avec Dieu, puis l'exploration de quelques-uns des attributs de ce principe. Sa démarche ne relève pas de croyances religieuses, mais de la pure rationalité philosophique. Il relève de la métaphysique en sa partie ultime, mais d'une métaphysique appuyée sur une physique. Il pourra arriver au cours de la réflexion de croiser des problèmes et des thèmes qui relèvent aussi des croyances religieuses. Ces points de contact, à l'exception de l'étude de la portée philosophique des croyances religieuses qui forme une partie importante du chapitre premier, seront signalés, mais ils doivent être considérés comme accidentels par rapport à la démarche et seront donc traités marginalement." (p. 7)
(...)
"La recherche scientifique d'un principe n'est pas exclusive de l'adhésion de foi à ce principe. Inversement la foi peut susciter le désir de démontrer ce que l'on croit ou une partie de ce que l'on croit. C'est une attitude de ce genre qui est à l'origine de la démonstration dite par la preuve ontologique due à Anselme de Cantorbéry et à un grand nombre de ses successeurs, comme aujourd'hui par exemple Plantinga. Le mérite de ces démarches est sans aucun doute leur recherche de scientificité et rigueur attestée d'ailleurs par un certain nombre de formalisations possibles, toujours chez Plantinga qui fait appel au système modal S5, ou chez Gödel qui a été préoccupé par une élaboration rigoureuse de la preuve pendant une longue partie de sa carrière.
Il est probable que l'idée de la preuve ontologique procède en partie de la vanité et de l'impossibilité de concevoir une démonstration à partir d'un principe situé au-delà du premier principe. Il vient facilement à l'idée devant l'impossibilité radicale

de posséder un principe au-delà du premier principe pour le démontrer, de recourir à une sorte de dédoublement du premier principe dont une partie sert de principe à l'autre. La preuve ontologique repose sur un mécanisme de ce genre : une partie du principe, son essence, sert à démontrer son existence." (p. 47)
Le Chapitre 3 contient une discussion détaillée des argument de Anselme de Cantorbéry, Kurt Gödel et Alvin Plantinga (pp. 47-62).

3. Bourgeois-Gironde, Sacha. 2002. "L'argument ontologique." In *Analyse et théologie. Croyances religieuses et rationalité* , edited by Bourgeois-Gironde, Sacha, Gnassounou, Bruno and Pouivet, Roger, 31-52. Paris: Vrin.

4. Breton, Stanislas. 1990. "L'argument ontologique aujourd'hui. Problèmes et perspectives." In *L'argomento ontologico / The ontological Argument / L'argument ontologique / Der Ontologische Gottesbeweis* , edited by Olivetti, Marco M., 665-678. Padova.

5. Bromand, Joachim, and Kreis, Guido, eds. 2011. *Gottesbeweise: von Anselm bis Gödel* . Berlin: Suhrkamp.

6. de la Sienra, Adolfo García. 2000. "The Ontological argument." In *The Rationality of Theism* , edited by de la Sienra, Adolfo García, 127-142. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

7. Dore, Clement. 1984. *Theism* . Dordrecht: Reidel.
See Chapters: 5. A Modal Argument 49; 6. Is God's Existence Logically Possible? 62; 7. Descartes's *Meditation V* Argument 82-103; Appendix: Two Argument of St. Anselm 141-147.

8. Durrant, Michael. 1973. *The Logical Status of 'God' and the Function of Theological Sentences* . London: Macmillan.

9. Gale, Richard. 1991. *On the Nature and Existence of God* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
See Chapter 6: *Ontological arguments* pp. 201-237.

10. Hick, John, and McGill, Arthur C., eds. 1967. *The Many-faced Argument. Recent Studies on the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God* . London: Macmillan.
Contents: Preface VII; Part I. The argument in Anselm; I. Anselm: *Proslogion (Chapter II-IV)* 3; Gaunilo and Anselm: Criticism and reply 9; III: Arthur C. McGill: Recent discussions of Anselm's argument 33; IV. A. Beckaert: A Platonic justification for the argument a priori (1959) 111; V. Karl Barth: A presupposition of the proof: the Name of God (1931) 119; VI. Karl Barth: *Proslogion III* : the special existence of God (1931) 135; VII. André Hayen: The role of the Fool in St. Anselm and the necessarily Apostolic character of true Christian reflection (1959) 162; VIII. Anselm Stolz: Anselm's theology in the *Proslogion* (1933) 183; Part II. The argument in recent philosophy; IX. John Hick: Introduction 209; A. Is existence a predicate?; X. Bertrand Russell: General propositions and existence (1918) 219; XI. Jerome Shaffer: Existence, predication and the ontological argument (1962) 226; B. The Hegelian use of the argument; XII. Gilbert Ryle: Mr. Collingwood and the ontological argument (1935) 246; XIII. E. E. Harris: Mr. Ryle and the ontological argument (1936) 261; XIV. Gilbert Ryle: Back to the ontological argument (1937) 269; XV. Aimé Forest: St. Anselm's argument in reflexive philosophy (1959) 275; C. The second form of the argument; XVI. Norman Malcolm: Anselm's ontological arguments (1960) 301; XVII. Charles Hartshorne: What did Anselm discover? (1962) 321; XVIII. Charles Hartshorne: The irreducibly modal structure of the argument (1962) 334; XIX. John Hick: a critique of the "Second argument" 341; Selected bibliography 357; Index of topics 371; Index of names 373.

11. Inwagen, Peter van. 1998. "Arguments for God's Existence: Ontological Arguments." In *Philosophy of Religion* , edited by Davies, Brian, 54-58. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
"This chapter gives a very compressed history of the ontological argument from Anselm to Kant, and discusses briefly a modern, modal version of the argument. It is argued that Anselm's and Descartes's versions of the argument are flawed, and

that one cannot know the main premise of the modal argument -- 'It is possible for there to be a perfect being (a being that has all perfections essentially)' -- to be true otherwise than by knowing, on some ground independent of the modal argument, that a perfect being actually exists."

12. ———. 2002. "Necessary Being: the Ontological Argument." In *Metaphysics* , 91-114. Boulder: Westview Press.
Second revised edition (first edition 1993).
Reprinted in: Eleonore Stump, Michael J. Murray (eds.), *Philosophy of Religion. The Big Questions,* Malden: Blackwell, 1999, pp. 69-83.

13. Kutschera, Franz von. 1990. *Vernunft und Glaube* . Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
See: Anhang: *1) Zum ontologischen Gottesbeweis* pp. 323-334.

14. Leftow, Brian. 2005. "The Ontological Argument." In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion* , edited by Wainwright, William J., 80-116. New York: Oxford University Press.
"I analyze and evaluate ontological arguments and objections to them in Anselm, Gaunilo, Descartes, his immediate objectors, Leibniz, Kant and Brouwer. Anselm comes off rather better than he is often portrayed, Kant rather worse; Descartes (I argue) is as bad as you've heard."

15. Logan, Ian. 2009. *Reading Anselm's Proslogion. The History of Anselm's Argument and its Significance Today* . Farnham: Ashgate.
Contents: Acknowledgements VII; List of Abbreviations IX; 1. Introduction 1; 2. The pre-text: the dialectical origins of Anselm's Argument 7; 3. The Text *Proslogion* 25; *Pro Insipiente* 59; *Responsio* 67; 4. Commentary on the *Proslogion* 85; 5. Anselm's defence and the *Unum Argumentum* 115; 6. The medieval reception 129; 7. The modern reception 151; 8. Anselm's Argument today 175; Conclusion: the significance of Anselm's Argument 197; Bibliography 203; Index 215.
"Presenting an account of Anselm's Proslogion argument, its background and its subsequent history in later thought is more than an exercise in intellectual archaeology. Work still needs to be done to understand what Anselm was trying to achieve arid how he was trying to achieve it, Anselm's argument presents an important paradigm for the history or ideas, since it has been treated directly or indirectly by so many different thinkers in subsequent centuries, and it provides a direct challenge to the way philosophy has been done over those centuries. That Anselm has been consistently misunderstood and misrepresented is a central thesis of this book. It is only by returning to and reading Anselm's text that we can hope to establish what he was trying to say and understand how he was trying to say it. Anselm's argument has fascinated and continues to fascinate philosophers and theologians, to such an extent that it is no longer possible in a single work to review exhaustively the history of its reception. Thus, the account of the reception in this book is selective, particularly in Chapter 8 where I limit myself in the main to its reception amongst modern English speaking philosophers. It is these philosophers who have been particularly concerned with the logical form, validity and soundness of. Anselm's argument, and to whom it is necessary to respond, if one wishes to discover wether Anselm still has something of philosophical interest to say to us in the Proslogion.
There has been a natural tendency amongst modern thinkers to adhere, wittingly or unwittingly, to a Whig view of history, to see the history of ideas as the steady progress of enlightened thought over benighted ignorance. The past is a bad or at best confused place, in which people concerned themselves 'with a lot of outdated foolishness', such as questions about the existence of God, which we now correctly consider to be irrelevant. (1) It is my hope that the study of Anselm's argument and its subsequent reception will help to counter such views, not because everything in the past was good, but because some things were, and it may just be that some of those good things are what 'we' now consider outdated and irrelevant.
Anselm's argument is frequently identified with later ontological arguments. It is one of my tasks in this work to show how that has happened, and that Anselm's

argument has to be addressed in its specificity, that 'that than which a greater cannot be thought' is the irreplaceable middle term of Anselm's argument, which for Anselm functions as the 'natural or proper word' for God. This is not simple a question of scholarship, but also of philosophy, for in my view the latter is aided by the former.
In this book I seek to create and 'audit trail' which stretches from (I) a prehistory of the text (Chapter 2) to (ii) the manuscript tradition and a translation which seeks to remain faithful to Anselm's Latin text (Chapter 3), presenting the Latin and English texts in parallel to (iii) a commentary on the text (Chapter 4) to (iv) an exposition of the debate that immediately followed its 'publication' (Chapter 5) to (v) a review and evaluation of the historical ongoing reception of the *Proslogion* (Chapters 6, 7 and 8). It concludes with an assessment of the significance of Anselm's argument." (pp. 1-2)
(1) See R. Rorty, 'The historiography of philosophy: four genres', in R. Rorty et al. (eds.), *R¨þé Philosophy in History. Essays on the historiography of philosophy* , Cambridge 1984, pp. 49-75, p. 52.

16. Mackie, John Leslie. 1982. *The Miracle of Theism. Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* . Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Chapter 3. Ontological Arguments: (a) Descartes's Proof and Kant's Criticism 41; (b)Anselm's Ontological Proof and Gaunilo's Reply 49; (c) Plantinga's Ontological Proof 55-63.

17. Matthews, Gareth B. 2004. "The ontological argument." In *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Religion* , edited by Mann, William E. Malden: Blackwell.

18. Micheletti, Mario. 1972. *Il problema teologico nella filosofia analitica. Vol. II: Lo status logico della credenza religiosa* . Padova: Editirice La Garangola.
Capitolo IV: L'argomento ontologico nella filosofia analitica 282-377.

19. Miethe, Terry. 1977. "The Ontological Argument: A Research Bibliography." *Modern Schoolman* no. 54:148-166.
"Within the past two decades or so there has been a gradual renewal of interest in metaphysics in general and in the theistic arguments in particular. This is the most comprehensive bibliography ever done on this argument for God's existence, with over 330 items listed. The article is divided into the following categories:
I. General histories of the argument; II. The argument in Anselm; III. The argument in the Middle Ages after Anselm; IV: The argument from Descartes to Kant; V: The Hegelian and Idealist use of the argument; VI. The argument in Continental philosophy; VII: The argument in British and American philosophy; VIII. The logic of "exists"; IX. The concept of necessary being; X: Additions as a result of additional research."

20. Olivetti, Marco M., ed. 1990. *L'argomento ontologico / The ontological Argument / L'argument ontologique / Der Ontologische Gottesbeweis* . Padova: Cedam.

21. Plantinga, Alvin, ed. 1965. *The Ontological Argument from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers* . London: Macmillan.
Contents: Richard Taylor: Introduction VII-XVIII; Part I. The ontological argument in the history of philosophy; 1. St. Anselm 3; 2. St. Thomas Aquinas 28; 3. René Descartes 31; 4. Benedict de Spinoza 40; 5. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz 54; 6. Immanuel Kant: The impossibility of an Ontological Proof of the existence of God 57; 7. Arthur Schopenhauer 65; Part II. Contemporary views of the ontological argument; 8. G. E. Moore: Is existence a predicate? 9. William P. Alston: The ontological argument revisited 86; 10. J. N. Findlay: Can God's existence be disproved? 111; 11. Charles Hartshorne; The Necessarily Existent 123; 12. Norman Malcolm: A. Malcolm's statement of Anselm's ontological argument 136; B. A reply by Alvin Plantinga: *A valid ontological argument?* 160; C. A reply by Paul Henle: *Uses of the ontological argument* 171-180.

22. Sciacca, Michele Federico, ed. 2009. *Con Dio e contro Dio. Raccolta sistematica degli argomenti pro e contro l'esistenza di Dio* . Milano: Marzorati.

Vol. I: Dai Presocratici a Kant (1972); Vol. II: Dal pensiero romantico a oggi (1972); Vol. III: Novecento teologico. Il Dio dei teologi (1995); Vol. IV: Novecento teologico: Il Dio dei filosofi e degli scienziati (1995).

23. Seifert, Josef. 2000. *Gott als Gottesbeweis. Eine phänomenologische Neubegründung des ontologischen Arguments* . Heidelberg: C. Winter.
Second improved and substantially (by a new statement of the core of the ontological argument of 102 pages and a Preface for the Arabic translation of 29 pages) enlarged edition. (First edition 1996).

24. Szatkowski, Miroslaw, ed. 2012. *Ontological Proofs Today* . Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag.
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1. Mirosław Szatkowski: Guided Tour of the Book: Ontological Proofs Today 19
Part II. Interpretation of Old Ontological Proofs. God's Attributes
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25. Tilliette, Xavier. 1990. "Quelques défenseurs de l'argument ontologique." In *L'argomento ontologico / The ontological Argument / L'argument ontologique / Der Ontologische Gottesbeweis* , edited by Olivetti, Marco M., 403-420. Padova: CEDAM.