

## RYLE VERSUS DESCARTES

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### ABSTRACT

*The key notion of most religions is the idea of a God, an all-powerfull, benevolent and providential being, who created the universe and all therein. Questions connected with the existence of God maybe the most important that we can ask and try to answer. If God exists, then it is of the utmost importance that we come to know that fact and as much as possible about God and his plan. If God exists, the world is not accidental, a product of mere chance and necessity, but a home that has been designed for rational and sentient beings. If there is a God, we ought to do everything possible to discover this fact, including using our reason in the discovery itself or as a means to test the validity of claims of such a discovery. Can the existence of God be demonstrated or made probable by argument? The debate or the argument between those who believe that reason can demonstrate that God exists and those who do not has continued to puzzle and fascinate philosophers ever since first set forth by St. Anselm. The Ontological Argument is important for two reasons: it claims to be an a priori proof for the existence of God and it is the primary locus of such philosophical problems as whether existence is a predicate or property. In this context, this paper, is interested in examining the ontological argument deeply in both René Descartes, who considered the ontological argument as valid, and Gilbert Ryle, who rejected the argument as invalid.*

**Keywords:** Ontological Argument, God, valid, invalid, existence, a priori

### RYLE DESCARTES'A KARŞI

#### ÖZ

*Dinlerin en önemli kavramı tüm evreni yaratmış, her şeye gücü yeten, her şeyi bilen, esirgeyen bir varlık olan Tanrı fikridir. Tanrı'nın varlığı ile ilgili sorular belki de sorulup yanıtlanmaya çalışılacak en önemli sorulardır. Tanrı varsa, o zaman bizim bu gerçeği bilmeye çabalamamız hatta Tanrı ve planı hakkında olabildiğince bir şeyler öğrenmemiz son derece önemlidir. Tanrı varsa, dünya tesadüfen yaratılmamıştır; sırf şans eseri veya zorunlulukla da var olmamıştır; tersine, rasyonel ve duygulu varlıklar için tasarlanmış bir evdir. Bir Tanrı varsa, bu gerçeği keşfetmek için elimizden gelen her şeyi yapmalıyız, buna bu keşfi yapmak için aklımızı işe koşmak ve böylesi keşif iddialarının geçerliliğini sınamak için yine aklımızı bir araç olarak kullanmak da dahil. Peki, argümanlarla Tanrının varlığı ispatlanabilir mi ya da böyle bir şey ihtimal dahilinde mi? Aklın Tanrının varlığını ispatlayabileceğine inananlar ile buna inanmayanlar arasındaki tartışma ya da kanıtlama Aziz Anselmus tarafından Tanrının varlığına dair ilk kez ortaya konduğundan beri filozofları şaşırtmaya ve büyülemeye*

*halen devam ediyor. Ontolojik Kanıtlama iki nedenden dolayı önemlidir: birincileyin, Tanrı'nın varlığına dair a priori bir kanıt olduğunu iddia ediyor ve ikincileyin varoluşun bir yüklem ya da nitelik olup olmadığını felsefe problemlerinin odak noktasına getiriyor. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada güdülen amaç, ontolojik kanıtlamayı geçerli olarak kabul eden René Descartes ile kanıtlamayı geçersiz diye yadsıyan Gilbert Ryle'in bu konudaki görüşlerini etraflıca irdelemektir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ontolojik kanıtlama, Tanrı, geçerli, geçersiz, varoluş, a priori*

### **Introduction**

St. Anselm (1033-1109) was born in Italy and was trained there for the priesthood. In 1093, he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in England by the Norman king William Rufus. His most important philosophical work is the *Proslogion*, in which he set forth a radically new proof for the existence of God. The proof, known now as the Ontological Argument, has been defended and rejected over the past nine centuries and has still been debated. The Ontological Argument is the attempt to prove the existence of God by starting with nothing more than the mere concept of the most perfect being. As a matter of fact the Ontological Argument begins with the definition of God as the greatest being possible or if you prefer as the most perfect being, the unlimited being, a being no greater than which is conceivable. Putting it differently, God is the greatest or most perfect being; a being who exists is greater or more perfect than a being who does not exist. Therefore, God must exist (Anselm, 1964: 7-9). The Ontological Argument remains to this day one of the most controversial arguments in all of philosophy. Several of the greatest philosophers of the seventeenth century including Descartes thought it was valid and developed their own versions of it. On the other hand, Immanuel Kant offered an elaborate refutation of the argument which was thought to have permanently laid it to rest. Just recently, however, there has been a revival of philosophical interest in the Ontological Argument. In this context, in this paper, my aim is to examine the ontological argument deeply in both René Descartes, who considered the ontological argument as valid, and Gilbert Ryle, who rejected the argument as invalid. For Ryle's part like Immanuel Kant argued, *existence is not a predicate*, therefore the ontological argument is not sound. However I claim that Ryle could not show us entirely where the ontological argument breaks down.

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Let us get started with Descartes's arguments related to ontological proof for the existence of God so that I can spell out its essential points. The subtitle of Descartes's fifth meditation is the essence of material things and the existence of God considered a second time. So Descartes begins with the intention of asking the question of what material things are in essence. When he is discussing about the ideas of corporeal world, he sees another way of proving the existence of God. It is this proof that I aim to illustrate right now. By the time he came to prove the existence of God, he had spoken of quantity, size, figure and so on which are the

categories of extended substance. Furthermore, these ideas are known by him clearly and distinctly through his imagination. Descartes goes on to say that he has so many ideas in him which have immutable and true natures, even though they do not refer to anything in external world. For example, he has an idea of triangle which is immutable and eternal because this idea is not dependent upon his mind. That is to say, a triangle has some characteristics which do not depend on him; for instance, it is the property of a triangle that its three angles equal two right angles and so on. As a result Descartes's point is this, even if there is no figure in external world whenever he thinks of a triangle, this triangle is a determinate nature which cannot be separated from it. I think what he is saying is this, a triangle is the object of mathematics which has a shape or other items which Descartes clearly and distinctly perceives (Descartes, 1986: 45). Having illustrated the mathematical items which he clearly and distinctly perceives, he goes on by saying that "if the mere fact that I can produce from my thought the idea of something entails that everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive to belong to that thing really does belong to it, is not this a possible basis for another argument to prove the existence of God?" (Descartes, 1986: 45). This is the criterion which Descartes can use as an evident to prove the existence of God. As a matter of fact, according to Descartes, "there are only two ways of proving the existence of God, one through his effects, the other through his very essence or nature" (Williams, 1978: 153). It is this second way, through the essence, which has been called Descartes's ontological argument. According to Descartes, the idea of God, which is a supremely perfect being, is as clear and distinct as the idea of any shape. So there cannot be a perfect being which does not contain existence for Descartes. Since existence is a perfection, perhaps the highest perfection, it will be contradictory not to include in it the distinctness of the clear and distinct idea of God. Therefore, existence must necessarily be attributed to the idea of supremely perfect being. In other words, examining the idea he has of a perfect being, he finds that existence is included in this idea; consequently it is certain that God, who is this perfect being, exists.

Descartes here is saying that there is an obvious logical connection between being God and existing, just as there is an obvious logical connection between being a triangle and having three angles that equal 180 degrees. However the idea of God is a special case because the idea of God possesses all perfections and for Descartes one perfection is existence itself. As a result of this the essence of God necessarily contains existence. As we have seen, for Descartes from the idea of God it follows necessarily that God actually exists.

According to Descartes, at first glance, this argument looks like a sophism; but the reason why this simple argument may appear a sophism is that as a rule, we make a distinction between essence and existence so that we do not see that in the case of God his essence involves his existence. This is one of the three possible objections to his argument which he proposes against himself. To repeat, essence and existence is inseparable in the case of God because such a supremely perfect

being must have all perfections and existence is itself a perfection. In other words, if existence is not a perfection, God could not be a supremely perfect being. For that reason, there is a logically necessary connection between being God and existing (Descartes, 1986: 46).

Another possible objection is this. Descartes cannot think of God without existence, but that does not mean that he can think of God as existing, therefore God exists. Descartes goes on to say that "there is a sophism concealed here. From the fact that I cannot think of a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that a mountain and valley exist anywhere, but simply that a mountain and a valley, whether they exist or not, are mutually inseparable. But from the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God, and hence that he really exists" (Descartes, 1986: 46). What Descartes says is this; it is the necessity of God's existence that determines his thought, and for that reason, he cannot think of God without existence. This is called "*de re* modalities" which necessity comes from the thing itself. On the other hand, according to Descartes, he could conceive of a horse with wings because he is free to think a horse with wings. So in this example of a winged horse, winged horse is dependent upon Descartes's thought; that is to say, Descartes can think of a horse either with wings or without wings because there is no logically necessary connection between being a horse and being winged. However in the case of God, existence is a particular perfection which cannot be removed from God (Descartes, 1986: 46).

Let us quote the last possible objection and then try to explain it. Descartes says that "while it is indeed necessary for me to suppose God exists, once I have made the supposition that he has all perfections (since existence is one of the perfections), nevertheless the original supposition was not necessary. Similarly, the objection would run, it is not necessary for me to think that all quadrilaterals can be inscribed in a circle; but given this supposition, it will be necessary for me to admit that a rhombus can be inscribed in a circle which is patently false" (Descartes, 1986: 46). In my point of view, What Descartes's point is this: If he thought a certain thing to be true, another thing would certainly follow from it inevitable. Only he does not need to think that thing is true and in the example he takes it is not. He goes on by saying that "now admittedly, it is not necessary that I ever light upon any thought of God; but whenever I do choose to think of the first and the supreme being, and bring forth the idea of God from the treasure house of my mind as it were, it is necessary that I attribute all perfections to him, even if I do not at that time enumerate them or attend to them individually" (Descartes, 1986: 46-47). As Far as I figure out what Descartes says is this: First of all it is not necessary to think of the circle having such properties as to enable all quadrilateral figures to be inscribed in it. Secondly, if we did it, it would be false. On the other hand, in the case of God, while it is true that it is not always necessary to think of the idea of a perfect being, he cannot think of such a being as non-existent. In addition to this, there is no necessity for him to think of the figure in relation to the inscribing of quadrilaterals inside it.

As a result of these three possible objections, Descartes argues that this idea of supremely perfect being is not dependent upon his thought; on the contrary "it is an image of a true and immutable nature" (Descartes, 1986: 47). In order to support his argument, he gives other further considerations to us. According to Descartes, God is the only supremely perfect being whose existence pertains to his essence. Moreover there is only one God due to the definition of God that God is eternal, infinite, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent and the creator of all things (Descartes, 1986: 28). Finally according to him, these attributes of God which I illustrated above cannot be taken away from him.

So far, I have tried to illustrate Descartes' ontological proof of the existence of God. As we have seen, conceiving of God as a supremely perfect being, he noted that he possessed a clear idea of such a being within himself. For discovering the nature of God, he had only to discover what was contained in this idea. As a result, he found that the idea of existence was inseparable from God's essence even in thought. Another way in which he expressed this was by asserting that God, who is the supremely perfect being, cannot be thought of except as embodying every perfection. However, for Descartes existence is itself a perfection; so it follows that God cannot even be thought of except as a real being. As we have already seen again, Descartes goes on to say that existence is not contained in the idea of anything else; whatever he might form an idea of, he can always conceive to be non-existent at some time or other, with the sole exception of God. For instance, no absurdity is involved in saying that a winged horse either that it does or that it does not exist. However considering God, Descartes maintained that one can no more conceive him as non-existent than one can conceive a plain triangle, the angles of which are not equal to the sum of two right angles. As a result, if one affirms that what he is thinking of does not have angles equal to the sum of two right angles then it follows either that his idea of a triangle is unclear or that he is thinking of something other than a triangle. Similarly, if one affirms that God does not exist, then it follows either that he is not applying the name God to a supremely perfect being or that his idea of God is very unclear in terms of Descartes. Before looking at the objections and replies, I would like to say something about ontological proof of the existence of God. Descartes needed a demonstration of God's existence and with it God's trustworthiness or veracity for banishing his own philosophical skepticism and establish the reality of a material world that he had professed to find himself capable of doubting. Hence ontological argument was very suitable to Descartes's purposes for proving the existence of God. It is because Descartes's argument for God's existence should not use any premises which refer to material world since the existence of such a world is still at this stage of meditations in doubt. In addition to this, Descartes thought that the only sure way to metaphysical truth and certainty was through the formation of clear and distinct ideas, which are dependent upon the existence of God and the rational analysis of them.

Let us get down the business now spelling out the objections and replies akin to Descartes' ontological argument. In the fifth objections, the objector (Gassendi) claims that Descartes is comparing existence with a property to prove the existence of God. It would be alright if he compared essence with essence or existence with existence, but Descartes is wrong when he compares existence with a property. For example, he should have claimed that omnipotence or omniscient cannot be separated from the essence of God instead of saying that existence cannot be separated from the essence of God. That is to say, objector is saying that existence is not a property; so it cannot belong to essence of God. Furthermore he adds that we cannot talk about existent unless something exists in reality, therefore we cannot say that this thing is perfect or not perfect without knowing that or this thing exists in reality. According to objector again, Descartes says that he cannot think of God without existence while he can think of a horse with or without wings. That is to say, without existence God cannot be a complete being in terms of Descartes. As a result, in the idea of a perfect being all perfections are included as well as existence. However objector asserts that why not we can think of an idea of a perfect pegasus, to with, objector claims that by using the same reasoning which Descartes employed, it is possible to prove the existence of every perfect being, such as a perfect pegasus or a perfect island (Descartes, 1986: 95-96).

Descartes answers to the fifth objections by saying that existence is a perfection; he is not saying that existence is a predicate. However whether or not existence is or is not a predicate, necessary existence is certainly an attribute of a perfect being because of God's essence. That is to say, it is impossible for such a being to have all the attributes of a perfect being except the attribute of necessary existence. In a few words, unless necessary existence is an attribute of God, God cannot be a perfect being. So Descartes is talking about the necessary existence to which belongs God, not mere existence. In addition to this, this supremely perfect being preserves himself and everything including a triangle is dependent upon him; therefore we can separate existence and essence in everything except for in God (Descartes, 1986: 97).

Again in the fifth objections, objector claims that there is no differences between St.Thomas's definition of God and that of Descartes's. It is because where St.Thomas says "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" Descartes says "a supremely perfect being". Furthermore, according to objector, their conclusions are the same too. That is to say, both of them made conclusions that their notions of God imply existent, therefore God exist in reality. I think objector's question is this; how can Descartes show us that his argument is different from that of St.Thomas's? Secondly, he goes on to say that Descartes's argument is based on a supposition that supremely perfect being actually exists. He asserts that even if supremely perfect being implies the existence that does not mean that it really exists in reality. However it shows that existence as a concept is connected to the supremely perfect being as a concept. For supporting his argument, he gives the example of "existing lion". He says that this example contains both lion and

existence as a complex thing. So suppose we removed either existing or lion from this complex unity, then it is not going to be the same complex. From here, can we not say that existence pertains to the essence of the composite "existing lion"? So what Descartes makes is a supposition that supremely perfect being contains existence; therefore it exists in reality. That is to say, there is no differences between the complex "existing lion" and "supremely perfect being exists". As a result, objector says that this proof for the existence of God does not work out (Descartes, 1986: 99).

Descartes replies to his objector by saying that his argument is different from that of St.Thomas's; because St.Thomas is interested in if the existence of God is obvious to everyone. On the other hand Descartes's argument is based on premisses which are clear and distinct. Moreover Descartes is trying to find out what God is not whether it is obvious to everyone or not. So having carefully investigated what God is, he discovers that existence which is clear and distinct for Descartes pertains to God's true and immutable nature; and he can claim that God exists in reality which is the conclusion coming from the clear and distinct premisses. In order to make his argument clear, Descartes says that we need to make a differences between possible and necessary existence. We can see the necessary existence in the case of God while we can observe the possible existence in everything other than God. That is to say, existence which is in reality is necessarily and always associated with the other qualities of God; therefore God exists in terms of Descartes (Descartes, 1986: 100). Descartes goes on to say that we have some ideas in us which do not contain true and immutable natures, to wit, either we made them up or intellect put them together. For example, he conceives of a winged horse or an existing lion or a triangle which is inscribed in a square; however at the same time, he thinks of a lion without existing or of a horse without wings or of a triangle without a square because these things, according to Descartes, have no true and immutable natures. That is to say, these things are capable of existing but not necessarily. From here, he argues that if he had used the same argument which St.Thomas employed, he would not have concluded that God exists necessarily; because according to St.Thomas's argument, you can make a conclusion that God is capable of existing not necessarily exists (Descartes, 1986: 101).

Now I am going to set forth Ryle's opinions related to the ontological argument so that I can compare his ideas with those of Descartes regarding the ontological argument. Before doing that let us have a quick look Ryle's general philosophical views. The English philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900-1976) alongside Wittgenstein and Austin was one of the dominant figures in the middle period of twentieth-century English language philosophy which became known as 'Linguistic Analysis'. He was an english analytic philosopher known especially for his contributions to the philosophy of mind and his attacks on Cartesianism. Ryle was a Professor of philosophy at Oxford, successor to G.E. Moore as editor of the philosophical journal *Mind*. As mentioned, he was one of

the most influential figures in British philosophy in the 1950s and 1960s (Miller, 1992: 116-120).

His views in philosophy of mind led to his being described as a ‘logical behaviorist’ and his major work in that area *THE CONCEPT OF MIND* (1949) both by reason of its style and content has become one of the modern classics of philosophy. In it Ryle attacked what he calls ‘Cartesian Dualism’ or the “myth of the Ghost in the Machine” arguing that philosophical troubles over the nature of mind and its relation with the body arose from a ‘category mistake’ which led erroneously to treating statements about mental phenomena in the same way as those about physical phenomena. For Ryle, to do something was not to perform two separate actions –one mental, one physical – but to behave in a certain way. Thus, he favoured a philosophical behaviorism: statements that use mental terms are like promissory notes which can be redeemed in the hard cash of physical terms in statements about behaviour and behavioural dispositions. The book also contained a version of an earlier influential paper which distinguishes knowing how to do something from knowing that such and such is the case; as well as argument against sense-data as objects in perception and images as objects in memory and imagination. As interchangeable terms, Ryle’s best-known work is the masterpiece *The Concept of Mind* that is an attack on what he calls *Cartesian Dualism* and defense of a type of logical behaviorism. This dualism he holds ‘the dogma of the ghost in the machine’, the Machine being the body that is physical and publicly observable and the Ghost being the mind conceived as a private or secret arena in which episodes of sense perception, consciousness and inner perception takes place. Then, a person is combination of such a mind and a body with the mind operating the body through exercises of will called ‘volitions’. Ryle’s attack on this doctrine is both sharply focused and multifarious. He finds that it rests on a category mistake, namely, assimilating statements about mental processes to the same category as statements about physical processes. This is a mistake in the logic of mental statements and mental concepts and leads to the mistaken metaphysical theory that a person is composed of two separate and distinct –though somehow related- entities, a mind and a body. It is true that statements about the physical are statements about things and their changes. But statements about the mental are not and in particular are not about a thing called “the mind”. These two types of statements do not belong to the same category. In order to show this, Ryle deploys a variety of arguments including arguments alleging the impossibility of causal relations between mind and body and arguments alleging vicious infinite regresses. To develop his positive view on the nature of mind, Ryle studies the uses of mental terms and finds that mental statements tell us that the person performs observable actions in certain ways and has a disposition to perform other observable action in specifiable circumstances (Ryle, 1949: 11-16).

Much of Ryle's work had a similar theme: philosophical confusion arose through the assimilation or misapplication of categorically different terms and could only be cleared up by a careful analysis of the logic and use of language. Ryle said the mind-body problem like so many philosophical problems is not a real problem but results rather from linguistic and conceptual confusion. That is to say, it is a problem that results from our misunderstanding and misuse of language and concepts. Ryle stated that Descartes and most people after him were guilty of a category mistake as he called it. This the mistake of treating a concept as if it belonged to one system or category of ideas when in fact it belongs to another.

At this point, I need to give E.E. Harris's ideas and argument as well because he said something against Ryle about ontological argument on behalf of R.G. Collingwood. However I will not examine Harris's argument very extensively since my job is dealing with Ryle's argument which is against the ontological argument. Thus, Ryle states that the modern interest in the ontological proof seems to center mainly around the form which there is something existent that is featured by our thought and a serious employment of this modified form of the ontological proof is made by Collingwood<sup>1</sup> who accepts it as the principle of philosophy in which it is indispensable that something actually exists which is only expressible in "categorical propositions". Unlike the propositions of the empirical sciences which are "hypothetical" and the subject-matter of which is contingent, the propositions of philosophy express something the essence of which involves existence (Ryle, 1935: 137-151). As a result of making this difference between the categorical propositions and hypothetical propositions, according to Ryle, Collingwood draws a conclusion that the ontological argument is valid and sound and is presupposed by all other philosophical arguments. Ryle goes on to say that According to Collingwood, the ontological proof does not establish any particular theological proof, but what it proves is that essence always involves existence in the case of God. It is these conclusions that Ryle is going to copy with in his two articles.

As a matter of fact, the debate between Ryle and Harris stem from the claims of Collingwood to the effect that the ontological method provided the model of philosophic science. Ryle's criticisms of this contention contain an expression with respect to the argument which purports to follow Kant's criticism of the proof, namely, if existence is predicate. Now, Kant asks whether the proposition "God exists" is an *analytic* or *synthetic* proposition. As Kant has it, an analytic proposition is a statement which merely spells out or analyzes what is already contained in the subject of the statement. For instance, 'Triangles have three angles' tells us nothing new about triangles. All it does is repeat what is already contained in the idea of a triangle. On the other hand, synthetic

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, cf. R.G. Collingwood's book, *An Essay on Philosophical Method*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933.

propositions add something to what is contained in the idea of the subject of the proposition. 'Bachelors are happy' is synthetic – whether or not it is true!-because being unhappy is not part of what we mean by being a bachelor. Kant argues that any proposition which asserts the existence of something must be a synthetic proposition. He thinks that this claim successfully undermines the Ontological Argument. So, for Kant, who stated that the existence of a thing is presupposed in its having any properties at all and cannot, therefore, itself be considered a property of anything, "existence is not a predicate" (Kant, 1966: 399-403).

At this point, Ryle goes on to question that what is the meaning of the expression which "essence involves existence" (Ryle, 1935: 143). He first argues that we use and employ essence only in relation; for instance, we talk about essential to something or the essence of something. That is to say, according to Ryle, "we can only speak correctly of the essence of some general character or description or predicate" (Ryle, 1935: 143).

Secondly, Ryle states that what does involving mean in the statement which "essence involves existence". He sets forth a few arguments to search for what involving means. He starts by saying that "involves means what is nowadays often meant by entails, namely the implication which holds between the having a certain specific character and the having the generic character of which the former is a species" (Ryle, 1935: 144). So if we say being triangle involves being shaped, but this is not valid for ontological argument which asserts that essence involves existence since it is likely to prove the existence of other things by using the same argument.

He goes on to say that we sometimes employ involving for denoting a natural law. For example, there is a connection between being heated and being expanded. However while there is no contradiction to deny this kind of connection between two things; it will be contradictory to reject the existence of God (Ryle, 1935: 145). Ryle argues that we can reject the existence of God because existence is not a predicate. That is to say, we cannot conclude validly from non-empirical premises to illustrate something really exists. He adds that Kant had already presented conclusively that from a proposition which is universal in form, it is impossible to deduce a particular proposition (Ryle, 1935: 142). Since existential propositions have some purported reference to a matter of fact, it is vital to go beyond the formal character of the universal proposition and apply a criterion of evidence by means of which the existence expressed by the statement may be verified.

So we can say that Ryle's problem is if a philosophical demonstration of existence is likely in general. According to Ryle, to prove that a particular pencil exists, it is essential to present evidence that it fills a determinate part of space at a given time. However this need cannot be satisfied by examining premisses which are non-empirical, such as those in a rational science and in philosophy. According to Ryle, the value of bring up the question of the ontological argument is that it

allows one to decide "with respect to the nature of philosophical theories, if philosophical arguments can establish the existence of anything" (Ryle, 1937: 53). If the ontological argument really demonstrates existence, the evidence for its soundness would have to be sought by the same method as empirical scientists use and employ when they claim existence for spiral nebulae. If this is out of the question, then it is not a "well attested hypothesis adduced to explain phenomena" (Ryle, 1937: 54). Therefore according to Ryle, since philosophy cannot demonstrate in the manner in which the scientist verifies the existence of an empirical datum, the proof of the God's existence is impossible by presenting the ontological argument.

After Ryle had published his article to reject Collingwood's point of view regarding the ontological argument, Harris attempted to defend ontological argument against Ryle. For Harris, the problem is if the datum on which a statement of empirical science is based can be illustrated to be a matter of fact. So according to Harris, in order to establish if it is a fact, it is necessary to set up a body of evidence. And this can be gotten only from the statements contained within the systematic unity of a rational science. In order to prove that the datum is a matter of fact, it is vital to show that the statement which expresses that it is a matter of fact is true. Thus, he says that in order to prove the existence of the pencil which Ryle used as an instance, neither an isolated perception nor an isolated proposition, is adequate, but both of them must form part of an ordered system. He continues to say that in the attempt to prove existence, therefore, we cannot stop on the level of empirical premises, but are forced to move beyond it, to a body of evidence which is non-empirical (Harris, 1936: 474-475).

In a nut shell, I am of the opinion that we can say that Harris's reduction of the empirical, perceptual element to a non-empirical principle involves a general idea that the pattern of proof for the existence of God is ultimately the same as for the existence of anything else (Harris, 1936: 478). Therefore for Harris, there is a certain sense although not that of syllogistic inference, in which there is a connection and a transition from universal non-empirical to empirical propositions (Harris, 1936: 478).

Ryle replies to Harris's challenge by stating that if the pattern of proof is the same for the statement that God exists, as for any other proposition, then it should be capable of empirical verification (Ryle, 1937: 54). So if it is possible to affirm that a particular dog has a particular tail, the statement that the ordered world of experience is an appearance of something else is either subject to the same tests or it arises from philosophical thoughts. However the scientist does not proceed to find evidence for the proposition that God exists, as he does with respect to the statement that there are spiral nebulae. For that reason, the proposition that God exists must result from philosophical thoughts and cannot be proved (Ryle, 1937: 54-55).

In a few words, Harris defended and demonstrated existence by asserting that it is necessary as a body of philosophical evidence into which rational and

empirical statements may be fitted. Ryle argued that existence is not and cannot be made a predicate, therefore ontological argument is not valid. In addition to this, he insisted that the core of the argument is not scientific and is therefore be sent to the area of philosophical theories. While Harris claimed that the structure resting beyond empirical science is indispensable in order that empirical propositions may be supplied significantly, on the other hand, Ryle said that it is not valid to infer from the universal to the particular since logical proposition has a general form. However, for Harris there is a mode of inference which lets us connect our general propositions with existing things.

In conclusion, It is my opinion, first of all Ryle ignores the importance of the fact that it is not the existence of anything in general that is in question in the ontological argument, but of an idea with a special character. In addition to this, Ryle did not show us where the ontological argument does not run. Of course I am not denying that Ryle's objections show that something is wrong with the argument, however he did not spell out what is wrong with it; to wit, which premise is false or which step is fallacious.

When we look at Descartes, in fact, he tries to prove God's existence from a mere definition of the word "God". That is to say, existence is thought of as part of the definition of a supremely perfect being. Since God, supremely perfect being, has all perfections and existence is a perfection; therefore God exists. So Descartes proves the existence of God without using any contingent premise. In other words, Descartes claims that just as the idea of triangle necessarily includes among the defining attributes of a triangle that of having its three internal angles equal to two right angles, so the idea of a supremely perfect being necessarily includes the attributes of existence. As a result, we can no more think of a supremely perfect which lacks existence than of a triangle which lacks three sides without contradiction. However as we know from the fact that for being a triangle a figure must have three sides, it does not follow that there actually are any triangles, and the same as in the case of the concept of a supremely perfect being. He explains this difficulty by saying that the essence of a triangle does not include the attribute of existence that of supremely perfect being does. Therefore, in that special case, we are authorized to make conclusion existence from a concept. That is to say, according to Descartes the only possible explanation of the non-existence of God would be a contradiction or incoherence in our concept of God.

It strikes me that for Descartes existence may not be a property of God, but "necessary existence" is. It is because necessary existence is a property ascribable to God in virtue of the fact that the assertion that God exists is a necessary truth. So Descartes is not talking about ordinary existence, but necessary existence. I can add that Descartes clearly seems to hold both that God's existence is a necessary truth and that existence is a part of the essence of God. Hence like I said earlier, Descartes is talking about necessary existence which is a perfection. When we look at the meaning of God, we notice that it is incompatible with this meaning that God's existence should depend upon anything. For that reason his

existence is necessary and whether we believe in him or not, we must accept that supremely perfect being cannot be thought of as being brought into existence by anything or as depending for his continued existence on anything. According to Descartes, as we have seen, the essence of God must be real because it is an essence inseparable from his continuous consciousness or experience of reality. Descartes makes a statement that it is the notion of the infinite precedes that of the finite. So Descartes' ontological argument has focused on this logical precedence. That is to say, Ryle is wrong by saying that it is pointless to say that a thing exists or does not exist if we do not say when or where; In other words, you could not mean anything unless you are ready to add the time and the place, because Descartes here is not talking about matters of fact, but he deals with a particular idea, the idea of God not that of anything else. As we have seen, Ryle does not pay attention the importance of the fact that it is not the existence of anything in general, but an idea with a special character. As a matter of fact, Ryle focuses on two arguments to refute the ontological argument which are that existence is not a predicate, about which Gassendi and Kant had said something, and that dispute is not scientific since we cannot make the empirical verification for these kinds of arguments. In my point of view, according to Descartes it is not the issue that whether or not existence is or is not a predicate, but necessary existence is certainly an attribute of a supremely perfect being. It is because of Descartes's definition of a perfect being that it is not possible for such a being to have all the attributes of a perfect being except the attribute of necessary existence. That is to say, unless necessary existence is an attribute of a thing, that thing cannot be a perfect being. In addition to this, for Descartes's part since the idea of God is the very ground of our existence, it is more than an idea. So if it had not existed, we would have had only vague and uncertain opinions. How can you apply the scientific verification to this argument while Descartes says this the idea of God and God is the source of his existence? I think in order to use a scientific verification, you are supposed to copy with matters of fact, but ontological argument is related to logical necessity not matters of fact.

In fact what Descartes claims is that what Descartes apprehends when he apprehends God is not the idea of God Merely, but is God. Therefore God is actually apprehended as existing, otherwise he could not be apprehended at all in terms of Descartes. Moreover, from Descartes's point of view, it would be absurd to think that Descartes existed, but that God, who conserves Descartes existence, does not exist. That is to say, the conserver's existence, namely, God's existence is the only real existence. As a result of this, not only our existence, but also our knowledge of something are dependent upon God. For example, Descartes can rely on his idea of a triangle to be always the same and he can rely on all the truths he finds within himself to be always the same; besides he can trust his memory due to the existence of God.

I think that according to Descartes, the question of whether God exists or not is not a question you can decide; because it is not only decided for you by the

very nature of your knowledge of God but also this idea is innate in us. Descartes discovers not simply that God exists but that it is impossible to think as non-existent God; and the impossibility consists in this that to think God as non-existent would imply to think his own non-existence which is impossible. It is because in that case Descartes cannot say that "I think; therefore I exist"; and again Descartes cannot say that "I think; therefore I exist" if existence is not a predicate or is not proved by scientific verification like Ryle said in his articles. I think that Ryle does not understand the position of the ontological argument in a philosophical system because the ontological argument is very convenient for Descartes to prove the existence of God since Descartes's argument for God's existence should not use any premisses to which refer material world. Like I said earlier, the idea of a perfect being is not only innate but has a peculiar nature that if anything is removed from it, it cannot be the idea of a perfect being. In addition to this, how is it possible that an innate idea does not exist? As far as we are told, if an idea is innate, it must be necessarily true and exist; otherwise it can not have been an innate idea.

In the final analysis, I do not think that Ryle's argument is strong enough to refute the ontological argument because he did not illustrate where the argument does not work out to us. He just said that this is not a scientific argument by which cannot be proved scientific verification; and existence is not a predicate like Kant had proposed earlier.

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