

First Argument Analysis Exercise

Write 2-3 pages providing an analysis of the following argument. In doing so,

- i Number the premises and the conclusion. Articulate each premise and the conclusion in no more than one sentence. Note that in order to do this, you may need to use a different wording than is provided by the text.
- i Indicate for each premise whether it is an assumption, or whether it is supposed to follow from earlier premises. (This should appear in parentheses after the premise.)
- i Include both explicit and implicit (or suppressed) premises. In other words, you may need to supply premises that are not explicitly stated in the text given.
- i After stating the argument, briefly explain it in your own words, and then comment on its cogency: Is the argument convincing? Are its premises plausible? Are the inferences sound? (If not, why not?)

Suppose we concede to Anselm that God, as he conceives of Him, is a possible thing. Now, of course, the mere knowledge that something is a possible thing does not enable us to conclude that that thing is an existing thing. Many possible things, like the Fountain of Youth, do not exist. But if something is a possible thing then it is either an existing thing or a non-existing thing. The set of possible things can be exhaustively divided into those possible things which actually exist and those possible things which do not exist. Therefore, if Anselm's God is a possible thing it is either an existing thing or a non-existing thing. We have concluded, however, that no non-existing thing can be Anselm's God; therefore, it seems we must conclude with Anselm that some actually existing thing does exemplify his concept of God.

--William L. Rowe, "The Ontological Argument" in
Reason and Responsibility, 11th edition, ed. J. Feinberg
and R. Shafer-Landau, p. 19, second column.

DUE DATE: Monday, September 24, at noon (at the beginning of lecture). Give your completed exercise to your teaching assistant. Late papers will be penalized.