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Clement Dore has offered a demonstration that God is possible. This is important because the Ontological Argument shows that if God is possible, it is necessarily true that God exists. Dore's demonstration parallels Descartes's *Meditation V* argument: (roughly) God by definition has all perfections; but (Dore proposes) *possible existence* is a perfection; therefore, God is possible. However, Leibniz recognized that Descartes's argument is incomplete, omitting proof that the concept of God is consistent. Dore's demonstration fails for just this reason. Dore's defense misses this objection. If the concept of God is consistent, that directly establishes that God is possible, making assumptions about perfections irrelevant.

Leibniz wrote that

> . . . certain philosophers, ancient and modern, have constructed a demonstration of God that is extremely imperfect. It must be, they say, that I have an idea of God, or of a perfect being, since I think of him and we cannot think without having ideas; now the idea of this being includes all perfections and since existence is one of these perfections it follows that he exists. But I reply, inasmuch as we often think of impossible chimeras, for example of the highest degree of swiftness, of the greatest number, of the meeting of the conchoid with its base or determinant, such reasoning is not sufficient. It is therefore in this sense that we can say that there are true and false ideas according as the thing which is in question is possible or not. And it is when he is assured of the possibility of a thing, that one can boast of having an idea of it. Therefore, the aforesaid argument proves that God exists, if he is possible. This is in fact an excellent privilege of the divine nature, to have need only of a possibility or an essence in order to actually exist . . . [1]

Leibniz attempted to supplement the ontological argument with a demonstration that God is possible. Unfortunately, it depends upon questionable suppositions concerning the concept of a perfection, and upon the questionable assumption that if a concept is not analytically inconsistent it follows that it is not inconsistent. However, Leibniz did recognize that the fundamental issue in the ontological argument is the consistency of the concept of God, which is the question of the

possibility of God's existence. The ontological argument shows that necessarily if God is possible, then God exists, but the proof that God is possible is lacking.

Recently, Clement Dore has offered a demonstration that God is possible.[2] Dore's proof is modeled after Descartes's *Meditation V* argument. Here is the demonstration, which Dore calls A_2:

> (1) The concept of God is the concept of a supremely perfect being.
> (2) The concept of logical possibility is the concept of a perfection relative to God.

So,

> (3) the concept of God stands to the concept of logical possibility as, e.g., the concept of a square stands to the concept of a figure which has more sides than three, i.e., it is a conceptual truth that God is logically possible.

Hence,

> (4) God really is a logically possible being. (p. 304)

(1) is usually held to be true by definition. (2) is supposed to parallel Descartes's premise that existence is a perfection. Accordingly, (2) might be subjected to criticisms similar to the traditional ones against Descartes. Some might argue that possible existence is not a genuine predicate, or perhaps not a perfection, a property that adds to the *greatness* of a thing.[3]

However, even if (2) could be adequately defended, A_2 still would not prove that God is possible. It suffers from the same defect Leibniz's remarks find in Descartes's demonstration.

Descartes's thought is that the concept of God logically includes the property of existence, just as the concept of a mountain logically includes the property of being conjoined with a valley—more accurately, just as the concept of an upward slope logically includes the property of being conjoined with a downward slope—or, just as the concept of a triangle logically includes the property of having three angles equal to two right angles.

However, that a property P is logically included in a concept C does not entail that C is consistent, or such that it is logically possible that there exists an object of C. It is true that the concept of the greatest number logically includes the property of being greater than two, but it is not logically possible that the greatest number exists. The concept of the greatest number is not consistent.

But, suppose the property in question *is* possible existence. If possible existence is logically included in the concept of an individual a, does this not establish that it is a conceptual truth that a is possible? No, for consider the concept of Arthur, the supremely perfect being that is F and not-F for some property F. If

possible existence is a perfection, then it is logically included in the concept of Arthur, since that concept includes all perfections. Nevertheless, it does not follow that it is a conceptual truth that Arthur is possible. That Arthur is possible cannot be any sort of truth. Since the concept of Arthur is not consistent there can be no such being.

Leibniz points out that determining the consistency of the concept of God is logically distinct from determining that it necessarily includes some property, and he argues that Descartes's demonstration omits proof that the concept of God is consistent.

Since A_2 differs from Descartes's demonstration only in that it substitutes the property of possible existence for the property of existence, even if it demonstrates that possible existence is logically included in the concept of God it omits proof that the concept of God is consistent. Therefore, A_2 does not prove that it is logically possible that God exists.[4]

Dore's defense focuses on establishing that the conclusion of A_2 is undeniably that God is really possible, rather than merely (the conditional claim Dore calls Φ) that if God exists then he is possible. I would say that if the concept of God is consistent, then the conclusion that God is really possible is true. However, the proof of the antecedent is missing. And, nothing in Dore's line of defense helps prove that the concept of God is consistent.

Dore's first strategy adds the assumption that ". . . it is a conceptual truth that God is possible entails the claim that it is because of the concept of possibility and the concept of *God* (and not some other being) that the sentence 'God is possible' expresses a truth.", which apparently is to follow from the assumption that ". . . it is the mark of a conceptual truth-expressing sentence that its being truth-expressing is explicable in terms of its expressing *precisely* the concepts which it expresses." (p. 305)

However, even if these assumed entailments were correct, they would offer no refutation of the Leibnizian objection to A_2. Whether or not the proposition that God is possible entails these things if it is a conceptual truth does not bear on the objection that A_2 does not establish that it *is* a conceptual truth since A_2 does not demonstrate the consistency of the concept.

Moreover, emphasizing that A_2 determines possible existence to be logically included in the concept of God precisely by virtue of the concept of God's including all perfections and the concept of logical possibility's being the concept of a perfection, rather than by virtue of any other assumption something or any other concepts, is of no help against the Leibnizian objection. For, the same can be said with respect to our determination that possible existence is logically included in the concept of Arthur. It gets included precisely because the concept of Arthur includes all perfections and the concept of logical possibility is the concept of a perfection, and not because of any other assumptions.[5]

Dore's second strategy, which argues that (4), 'God is really a logically possible being', is not analytic, is of no help against Leibniz's objection, either. Whether (4) would be an analytic or a synthetic truth is beside the point of the Leibnizian objection that A_2 does not establish (4)'s truth since it does not establish that the concept of God is consistent.

I conclude that A_2 has not been defended against Leibniz's objection to Descartes, and I do not see how it can be. Dore, himself, is to be commended for advancing a demonstration that God is possible.[6] Any such attempt is a step forward in a central challenge for rational theism, and merits the close attention of all concerned with these matters.[7]

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NOTES

1. Leibniz, G., *Discourse On Metaphysics*, Open Court Publishing Company, reprint edition, 1973, pp. 40-41.

2. Dore, Clement, "The Possibility of God," *Faith And Philosophy*, Vol. 1, no. 3, July 1984. All page references are to this text.

3. Dore speaks of the *concept* of logical possibility as the *concept* of a perfection relative to God. The alleged perfection, itself, I take to be a certain property, *being logically possible*, which for convenience I shall refer to as the property of possible existence.

4. Of course, if the concept of God is consistent (*broadly logically* consistent, to employ the contemporary term for the distinction from mere formal consistency), that directly establishes that God is possible, making the assumption that possible existence is a perfection, and indeed the whole procedure of A_2, superfluous.

5. Nor would Dore's treatment of logical truths in connection with his 'possible super-centaur' case reveal any differences between the concepts of God and Arthur that might save A_2. 'Arthur' is indeed similar to 'possible super-centaur' in that both concepts are artificially constructed with possibility built in. Dore might suggest, for this and other reasons, that both concepts lead only to the trivial logical truth that if any such things exist they are possible. It is certainly necessarily true of *any* concept that if its object exists its object is possible. However, artificially constructed and leading to logical truths or not, it is the case that if *these* concepts are consistent their objects necessarily exist, and that unless they are consistent their objects cannot possibly exist. The same holds for the concept of God in the ontological argument. 'Arthur' is explicitly inconsistent. 'Possible super-centaur', as well as other Gaunilo-type concepts, are not consistent since their objects cannot be necessary beings. Whether the concept of God is consistent is not clear. (I take up the difficulties which necessity in the concept of God creates for both the traditional Gaunilo response to Anselm and for a modern version of Gaunilo directed at modal ontological arguments, in my paper "A Primordial Reply To Modern Gaunilo's," *Religious Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, March 1986.)

6. Dore has also offered a different demonstration of God's possibility in his book *Theism*. It seems

not more successful than A_2, and offers no help for A_2 against Leibniz.

7. I am grateful to James Cargile for reading earlier drafts of this paper and making valuable suggestions.