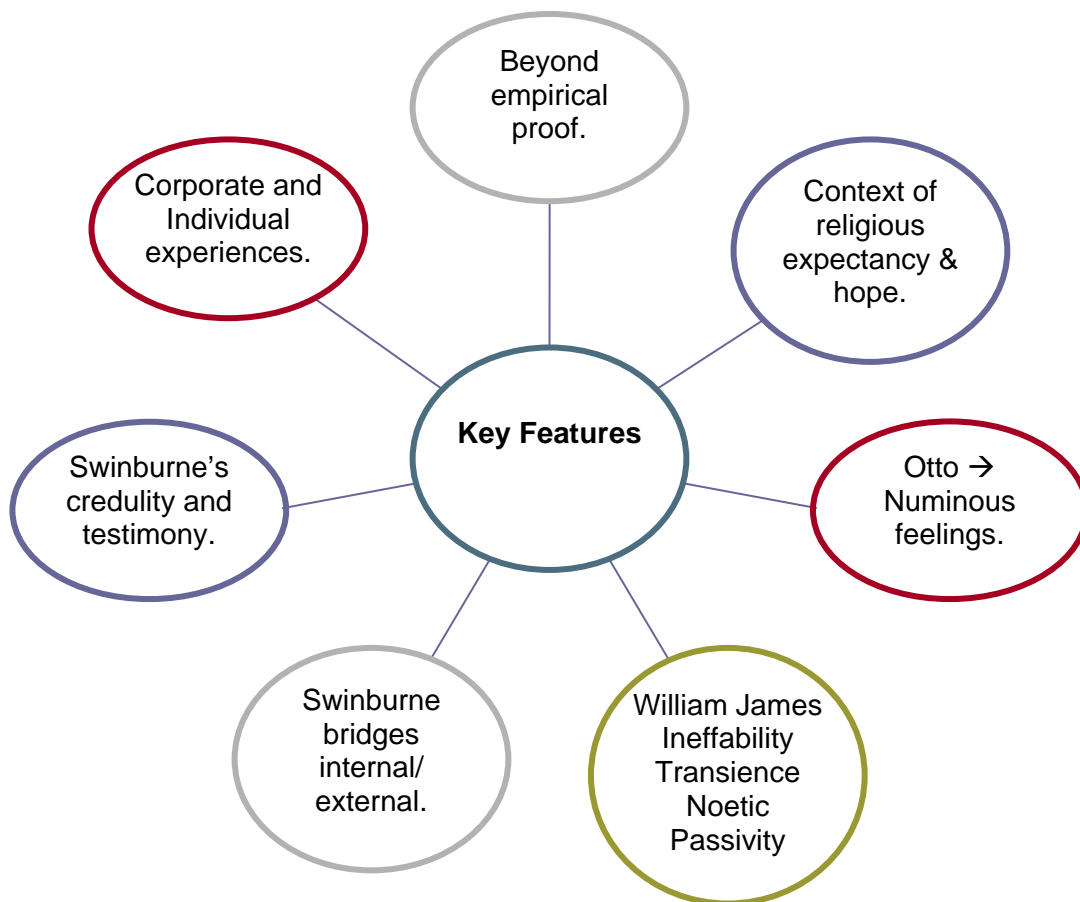


Argument From Religious Experience

- Argument rests upon belief in religious experience → a posteriori
- Definition → Religious experiences are beyond ordinary, worldly experiences in that they cannot be proved by empirical explanations. They often take place within a context of religious expectancy and hope – even if the experience occurs suddenly, it is often at the climax of a long process of spiritual struggle.
- Rudolph Otto → “numinous” → the feeling of being in the presence of a greater being which is with you yet somehow distant from you. Otto also observed that subjects were drawn into experiences with both fear and fascination, something termed *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.
- William James (psychologist) → *On the Varieties of Religious Experiences* → four key characteristics of a religious experience:
 - Noetic Quality (revelation from the experience)
 - Transient (profound impact in short time)
 - Ineffable (cannot be expressed in language)
 - Passivity (subject plays a passive role to a dominant, i.e. God)
- So now apply it as a proof for the existence of God. Religious Experience is an internal experience, personal to the self.
- Richard Swinburne → Links internal to external and says → If a subject believes they have experienced God, it is probable that God exists. This he backs up with two principles:
 - Credulity → “if it seems to a subject that X is present, then X is probably present”
 - Testimony → “in the absence of special considerations the experiences of others are probably as they report them”
- Thus from Swinburne we are able to say, since many people claim to have experienced God, we should trust these testimonies because there is no evidence to suggest they are erroneous in their beliefs.
- Might be corporate (gathering of people, i.e. Toronto Blessings) or individual (many biblical examples, etc). Which is more reliable?
- If God is interacting with humankind, why doesn't He do it more often? → Experience qualifies faith (why believe when you know) so God cannot reveal Himself. [Kierkegaard, belief must be the result of a leap of faith based on human experiences] → But, Swinburne contradicts slightly (and without cause) saying “an omnipotent and perfectly good creator will seek to interact with his creatures” which seems to suggest God is randomly interacting with some and not others – which doesn't seem like a very benevolent or just God. → But, some argue (University of Birmingham) more people have the experiences but repress them “a major educational task remains to encourage people not to repress such significant experiences”
- An experience involves sense, then interpretation. So it seems possible might be having experiences but not knowing it because they interpret it differently. Wittgenstein → “seeing-as”. The atheist might interpret a sense of calmness as something environmental, whilst the believer may take it as a religious experience.
- The argument rests upon empirical evidence, but there is no way this can ever be proved to be linked to God. We might observe the effects of something on a person, but we cannot truly observe the cause or the link to that cause. This break in the chain of causality means we are making inductive leaps. Logical Positivists → If not empirical or rational then meaningless.
- Everyday experiences can be misleading. Doubt of Swinburne's principles (i.e. eye witness testimonies to crimes are notoriously unreliable.) If these reports are unreliable, how much more unreliable will a report about a religious experience be?
- If people are in the context of religious expectancy, could they be creating the experiences psychologically to get around this need? “Brain Dreams”. Supported by science which can stimulate artificial experiences.
- Does not suggest a universal form of God (i.e. all religions have experiences, which is right?) Ok we can accept Judaeo-Christian God, but that is clearly not the same as an eastern understanding of God. → Ineffability, we are just using cultural language to express the same experiences. William James → Most experiences *do* follow pretty much the same pattern.
- Swinburne concludes with Cumulative Argument. → On their own none of the arguments really prove God, but put together, they make an overwhelming argument which cannot be denied in the grand scales of Atheism Vs Theism. But, logically and mathematically flawed, taking many low probabilities and adding does not make on more probable argument – in fact the opposite. You should be multiplying the weak arguments to get a *very* weak argument.
- Overall, key flaw is in Swinburne's use of the word “Probability”. The argument may let us accept that people have strange experiences which may or may not be the result of communication with the divine, but that does not let us conclude the existence of a classical God. Moreover Swinburne's cumulative argument seems to unintentionally argue against theistic belief via his flawed mathematics.

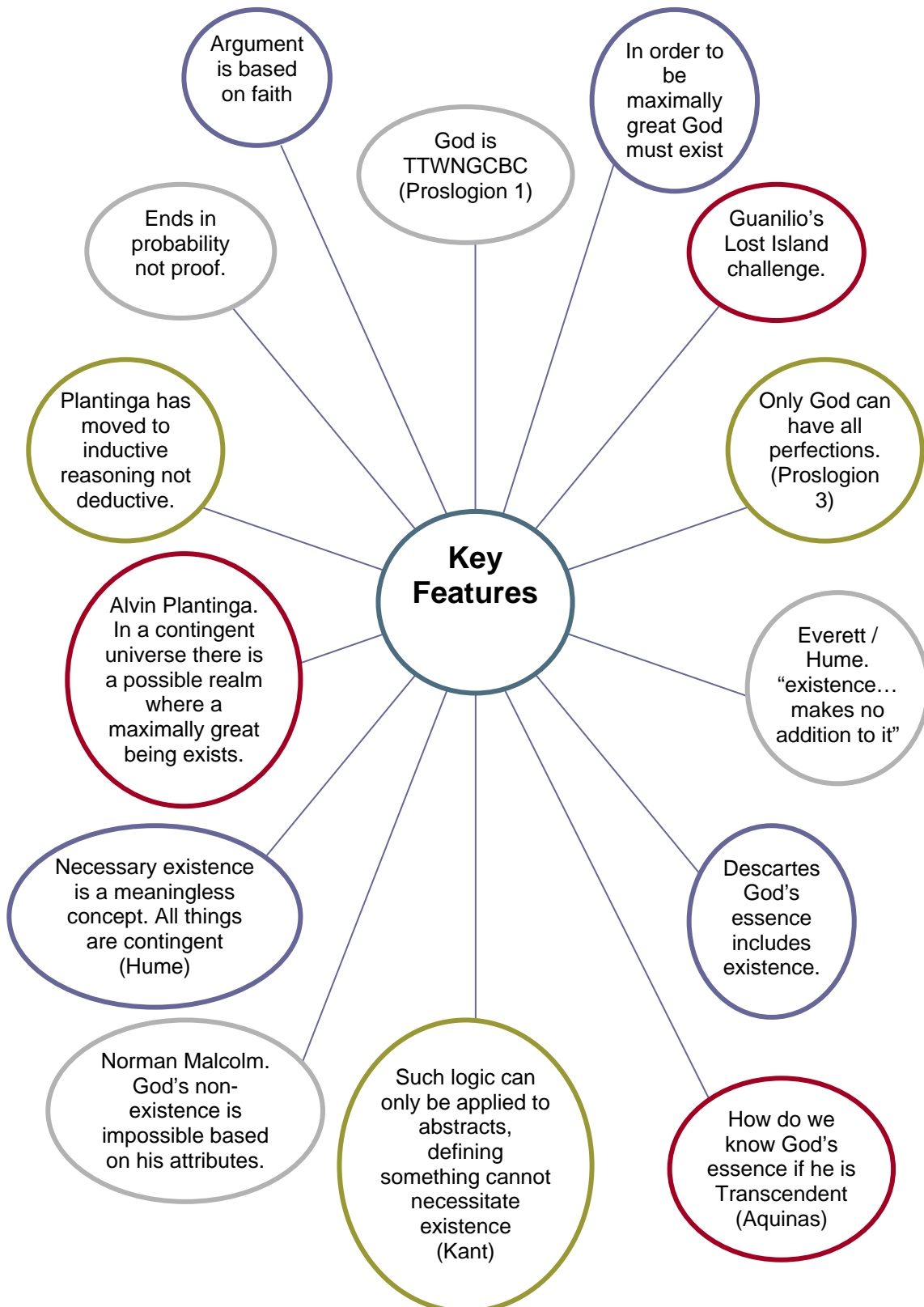
Argument From Religious Experience



The Ontological Argument

- Different from other arguments. It does not start from experience, it attempts to make an a priori claim to truth and if the argument succeeds, the existence of God is not probably – but necessary.
- First version by St. Anselm in 11th Century. In *Proslogion* God is defined as that than which nothing greater can be conceived. A definition which can be accepted by theists and atheists alike.
 - First Version →
 - God is TTWNGCBC
 - We can conceive of God.
 - Reality is greater than conception
 - Therefore, God must exist in order to be the greatest thing.
 - (Painter analogy, his work is only the best it can be after he has actually made it, so for God to be maximally great, he must exist).
- God must exist by virtue of the language used to describe him. This leap from language to reality is known as the Ontos leap.
- First version criticised by catholic monk Guanilio. Lost Island analogy, invites us to imagine a perfect island, which by Anselm's logical surely must exist to be maximally perfect.
- Anselm rephrases his argument to show how it can only be God who posses all perfections. An island cannot possess *all* perfections because only God can be defined in that way. It might be a perfect Island, but not an object possessing *all* perfections.
- Everett tries to break down the idea of reality being greater than conception. He argues that even after reformulation, Anselm is still defeated by Guanilio. → Hume “*that idea of existence, when argued with the idea of any object makes no addition to it.*” i.e. money example, £10 is £10 whether its in cash or whether its as a concept, whether it exists or not alters its usefulness but does not actually change what it is. Applying this to God, whether he exists or not cannot alter what he is, and therefore we defeat his necessary existence.
- Descartes forms a new version based on the essence of God.
 - Descarte's Version →
 - Whatever belongs to the essential nature of something cannot be denied it.
 - God's essence includes existence
 - Therefore, existence must be affirmed of God.
 - (Triangle Analogy, just as a triangle must have three sides, so must God exist).
- But, how do we know this about God? Even within the Christian faith not all agree we can know what God's essence is. Aquinas believes in a transcendent god. Kant says this sort of logical can only be applied to logical constructs (like triangles) not to objects because defining something cannot necessitate its existence. As such we defeat the clause “essence includes existence”.
- Norman Malcolm takes Anselm's second argument further in an attempt to defeat Kant's criticisms of Descartes. He says God is such a being that his non existence would be impossible based on his characteristics.
- Hume defeats Malcolm by saying necessary existence is an impossible concept, all things are contingent. A further criticism is to say that Malcom assumes attributes of God, we have no way of proving these.
- Alvin Plantinga provides one final reformulation.
 - Plantinga's Version →
 - In a contingent universe there is a possible world in which resides a being with maximal greatness
 - A being may only truly be maximally great if he resides in all worlds.
 - Our universe is contingent
 - Therefore, such a being exists in our universe.
- We have hereby moved away from deductive logical and are using inductive reasoning to suggest such a being *may* exist, rather than our concrete certainties of necessary existence in earlier forms of the argumenbt. We are reduced to working with probabilities, not proof.
- Anselm → “*Nor do I seek to understand so that I can believe, rather I believe so that I can understand*” → Argument is based upon faith (a justification for his own beliefs), rather than an attempt to generate new faith.
- No dependence on experience makes it hard to relate to, as well as uninviting that we can use language games to necessitate the existence of something.

The Ontological Argument



Life After Death

Immortality of the Soul

- Requires a dualist approach to personal identity which means that there is a distinction between our body and our actual self. This soul may or may not be immortal, but if it is, that constitutes an afterlife.
- Plato → *The Republic* → Soul belongs to a higher state of existence (World of the Forms). Therefore seemingly natural for soul to survive death.
- Aquinas → Similar View → The soul is “*what makes our body live*” “[*the*] *anima*”. It is a life force, at death it departs from us taking our identity.
- Descartes → Empirical scepticism, “*I can doubt that I have a body, but I cannot doubt that I exist. Therefore, I am not a body*”. Ultimately a self defeating argument, just because we can doubt it does not necessitate its non-existence.
- Swinburne → “*Since I can be without my body, it followed that I am not my body*”. Little evidence for how we can actually exist in a disembodied state. Brain Transplant thought experiment (*The Possibility of Life after Death*) → He attempts to defeat materialistic views by asking what happens to the self if the body is divided.
- Hugh Meller (materialist) *Reply To Richard Swinburne* → Brain transplant proves nothing and his dualist view is just as unable to explain the situation as a materialistic one.
- HH Price *Survival & The Idea of Another World* → Could we actually have a society of disembodied souls? Trapped in such a state is not the idyllic view of the afterlife presented by the Christian faith. But of course, how can we know what goes on in the afterlife; it need not obey the laws of science.
- Gilbert Ryle → talking about souls is a *category mistake*. “*if we have language which described body and soul as separate, it doesn't mean that they are*” (Brian Davies). Ryle suggests the soul is just a name for the collection of things we know as our body; it is not a discrete thing in itself.
- Peter Vardy → Without our body, just what is actually left to be the soul?
- Peter Geach → “*apart from the possibility of resurrection, it seems to me a mere illusion to have any hope for life after death*”.
- Brian Davies → “*It would seem there are serious problems with the view that people can survive death because they are essentially incorporeal*”. Dualism is *impossible* Instead Davies suggests the only **possible** outcome is materialism/resurrection.

Resurrection

- Requires a materialist stance (that the body is all there is). Note that they do not suggest this actually *happens*, it is just that it is conceivable that it *might* happen and that it is possible it *could* happen. Unlike dualism which seems to be philosophically incoherent.
- Hick → Replica Theory. Person A disappears, identical person B appears... are they the same?
- Davies → “*for the continued existence of a person, more is required than replication*”. Replica theory isn't very reassuring; it doesn't feel like it will be you.
- Vardy *God of our Fathers* → Computer analogy, God can print off new copies of us. God wouldn't allow identity crisis from two copies (so avoiding that risk in Hick's analogy). But, this depends upon God! And assumes His properties!
- Conceivable that our body could be completely reassembled, by God or by higher power, and as such, if we are re-made, surely we are as we were before and therefore we *are* what we were before... and as such we are living beyond death. This is not possible with current technology, but there is no logical barrier preventing its possibility.

Life After Death

