

ONTOLOGICAL PROOFS TODAY

Abstracts

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A simple ontological argument

The contemporary versions of the ontological argument originated from Charles Hartshorne and Norman Malcolm are formalized proofs based on unique modal theories. The simplest known theory of this kind arises from system B of modal logic by adding two extra-logical axioms: (a) “If the perfect being exists, then necessarily exists” and (b) “It is possible that the perfect being exists”. A similar argument is presented in the paper, however none of the systems of modal logic is relevant to it. Its only premises are the axiom (b) and – instead of (a) – the new axiom (c): “If the perfect being doesn’t exist, it necessarily doesn’t”. It is showed that (c) is no more controversial than (b).

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Modified Gaunilo-type objections against modal ontological arguments

Modal ontological arguments are often said to be immune to the «perfect island» objection of Gaunilo, because necessary existence does not apply to material, contingent objects. But Gaunilo’s strategy can be reformulated: we can speak of non-contingent beings, like Evil God or quasi-Gods. I will try to show that we can construct ontological arguments for the existence of such beings, and that those arguments are equally plausible as theistic modal argument. This result does not show that this argument is fallacious, but it shows that it is utterly useless as an argument for theism.

Sergio Galvan

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Two types of ontological frame and Gödel's ontological proof

An ontological frame is the model-theoretical basis of an ontological theory. From my point of view the ontological frame can be considered as a universal modal frame constituted by a set of possible worlds, an object-domain of possible entities characterized by rigid predicates, and a non-rigid predicate of existence, which is at the basis of the distinction between purely possible and actual entities. Only the existence predicate is intended as a non-rigid designator. Further, I shall consider two types of ontological frame: the first one

connected to Kant's concept of possible object and the second one related to Leibniz's. Leibniz maintains that the source of possibility is the mere logical consistency of the notions involved, so that possibility coincides with analytical possibility. Kant, instead, argues that consistency is only a necessary component of possibility. According to Kant, something is possible if there is a cause capable of bringing it into existence; to this end consistency alone is not sufficient. Thus, while the Leibnizian notion of consistency is at the root of the concept of analytical possibility, the Kantian notion of possibility is the source of real possibility. This difference plays an important role in the discussion of Gödel's ontological proof, that can be formally interpreted in the ontological frame of the pure perfections. While this proof is conclusive in the context of Leibniz's ontological structure, it is not within the Kantian ontological frame. In my talk I'll present the fundamental aspects of both ontological frames and their relations to Gödel's ontological argument.

Stamatios Gerogiorgakis
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Does the kind of necessity which is represented by S5 capture the notion of the necessary being?

My main question is the following: is S5 a system adequate to the idea of a universe created, governed or at least inhabited by a necessary being? If by "necessary" being a physical necessity is meant, then S5 seems to be inadequate to capture the notion of a necessary being. S5 is modeled in a reflexive, symmetrical and transitive frame. Arguably, symmetrical frames cannot model physical necessity. Moreover there are Kantian arguments against the idea that physical necessity could be modeled by reflexive frames.

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Anselm, *remoto Anselmo*, or how his *ratio* of the *Proslogion* is adulterated

It seems that Charles Hartshorne was right when he voiced his criticism of the way in which Anselm is treated by those who comment on his famous argument; "If Anselm is to be refuted, it should be for what he said, taken in something like the context which he provided, and not for something someone else said he said, torn wholly out of context". The main culprit in this respect is Kant, who without ever reading Anselm, is considered to be one of his major critics.

If Leszek Kołakowski noticed that Anselm's *ratio* of the *Proslogion* is "irritatingly troublesome", one might add that certain stereotypes, which have come to be held as standard opinions regarding this argument, are just as irritating.

It is the author's purpose to denounce these opinions and to suggest how they be corrected.

The *ratio Anselmi* entails a rich array of elements: dialectics (logic), metaphysics, the contemplation of revealed truth, supported by faith and sound conscience; these should all be considered, if one is to gain a proper understanding of Anselm's great discovery.

Three problems are duly considered:

- a) Is the *ratio Anselmi* a proof of the existence of God and should it be called “ontological”?
- b) Is Anselm rightly accused of not abiding by the rule “de posse ad esse”?
- c) Does the fact of Aquinas’ criticism of the *ratio Anselmi* imply that Aquinas disregarded Anselm’s thought?

The main cause of the improper understanding of Anselm’s *ratio* would appear to be the misapprehension of Anselm’s aim and purpose in writing the *Proslogion*, as well as an uncritical reception of the opinions of Gaunilo, Thomas Aquinas and Kant.

Anselm, in replying to Gaunilo’s criticism, refers him to his faith and conscience as the surest arguments in the matter. This would mean that apart from dialectics, there are other foundations for his argument, ones which centuries later appear as essential for John Henry Newman. The whole idea of *fides quaerens intellectum*, in which spirit the *Proslogion* is written, would preclude the acceptance of the *ratio* being taken as a *sensu stricto* proof. Those who maintain that Anselm’s *ratio* is a proof, will always experience difficulties in making sense of it, because of a basic misunderstanding of Anselm’s aims. In the *Proslogion*, his *point de départ* (as well as the original title: *Fides quaerens intellectum*) clearly indicate what he intends to achieve. His purpose was to make sense of a verse of psalm 14, “Dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus”. In his earlier work, the *Monologion*, Anselm looked for reasons of an *a posteriori* kind, which would make God’s existence discernible; however, his intention in the *Proslogion* is to present one reason of an *a priori* type, which alone would suffice to realize that what the fool says in his heart does not stand to reason. The *Proslogion* was written for his fellow-monks and not for the purpose of converting the unbeliever or to give a logical proof of God’s existence. We cannot hope to understand the *ratio Anselmi* by limiting our attention, as is very often the case, to chapters 2-4 of the *Proslogion*. E.I. Zieliński rightly suggests that it is important to perceive the *Proslogion* as a sequel to the *Monologion*, and that they both form a unity which best helps understand Anselm’s thought and intentions.

The formula *id quo maius cogitari non potest* has received wide acclaim not only as the basic element of Anselm’s *ratio*, but also as playing a fundamental role in theism. As Norman Kretzman notices, “it is especially ingenious just because it seems to obviate any need to have a detailed conception of the very thing that God is in order to argue that God exists”. It does not really lend itself to be treated as “perfect being” idea, as in the case of Descartes. As Hartshorne rightly notices, “By substituting terms like ‘perfect’ for the by no means equivalent conception of unsurpassability, Descartes lost one of the best features of Anselm’s terminology”. *Id quo maius cogitari non potest* has been treated by many as a definition of God and Anselm’s argument as a case of speculating on this “definition”. This trait of inconsistency introduces an element alien to Anselm’s understanding and also bears the responsibility for his *ratio* being labeled an “ontological” argument. Anselm’s formula does not constitute a definition of the divine Being and, what follows, does not offer an ontological analysis of it. Here again, the fact that Kant addresses his criticism to ontological arguments and that this has been projected onto Anselm’s *ratio* - of which he knew little - is another inconsistency to be denounced. Unfortunately, the term “ontological” has stuck to Anselm’s metaphysical masterpiece ever since.

As regards accusing Anselm of not honouring the “de posse ad esse non valet illatio” rule, this is another example supporting Hartshorne’s opinion: those who have not read Anselm with due attention, interpret him in an *a priori* “*remoto Anselmo*” fashion. Anselm’s awareness of the difference between *esse* and *posse* is evident in chapter 2 of the *Proslogion*:

“Aliud est enim rem esse in intellectu; aliud intelligere rem esse”. Edith Stein had no difficulty in understanding Anselm when she rejected Aquinas’ criticism: “we are not convinced by the traditional refuting of the ontological proof founded on Thomas [Aquinas] and called an <<unjustified passing from the logical to the ontological order>>, which means a passing from essence to existence; and although such a passing is inadmissible in the case of finite beings, this does not mean that we may judge by this in respect of an infinite being”. This uniqueness of the divine Being, which distinguishes it from other beings, is fundamental to both Anselm’s and Stein’s approach to the problem – a point, which Gaunilo and Kant failed to see.

The third problem, which considers the effects of Aquinas’ criticism of Anselm, is really one of a proper appreciation of Anselm’s achievements. It is a fact that Aquinas is, in many ways, indebted to Anselm, something, which few, whether “partisans” of Thomas or Anselm, seem to realize. Their jumping to conclusions that one who voiced his criticism of Anselm would not let himself be inspired by other aspects of his thought is a common fallacy. Aquinas was one of the first to notice Anselm’s metaphysical talent in the way he spoke of the divine Being. The most significant instance of this is Aquinas’ pointing out Anselm’s *modus loquendi* in his understanding of the divine *esse*: that the divine Being’s *esse* is its own essence – an idea, which Aquinas made use of in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.

That, after nine centuries, the *ratio Anselmi* still provokes discussion, would seem to support Roger Scruton’s opinion, “Indeed, it is the one argument for God’s existence that is still alive, and which perhaps always was alive, even before Anselm gave explicit voice to it”. Concluding, I shall consider the intuitive aspect, linked to faith, as one advocating the more sensible approach to the problem of God’s existence. In doing so, I shall refer to Newman and Maurice Blondel. Speaking of the latter, Etienne Borne comments that, according to blondelism, “l’idée du salut (...) est la plus haute idée de la philosophie (...) il n’y a pas ici d’autre argument ontologique que la révélation elle-même”.

Peter van Inwagen
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Three versions of the ontological argument

The “three versions of the ontological argument” considered in this paper are St Anselm’s, Descartes’s (or, more exactly, Descartes’s argument on one interpretation) and the recent “modal” argument of Hartshorne and Plantinga. The following three theses are defended. (i) Anselm’s argument presupposes that there are two modes of being (being *in intellectu* and being *in re*) and thus presupposes a theory of being that is in a certain loose sense Meinongian. Those who reject Meinongianism should therefore reject Anselm’s argument. (ii) It is possible to interpret the argument of Book V of Descartes’s *Meditations* as being very like Anselm’s — as presupposing a “meta-ontology” that is in certain sense Meinongian. But another interpretation of the argument is possible, an interpretation according to which the argument does not appeal to two modes of being. The argument according to this second interpretation is examined and is found to have a false premise. (iii) The conclusion of the modal argument is that there exists a metaphysically necessary being who has all perfections essentially. Despite the fact that the logical validity of the modal argument is beyond dispute, the argument is epistemologically defective: one does not, in coming to understand the argument, thereby come to have any reason to believe that there exists a metaphysically necessary being who has all perfections essentially.

Stanisław Judycki

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Descartes's ontological proof. An interpretation and defense

It is widely assumed among contemporary philosophers that Descartes's version of ontological proof (1. I have an idea of a supremely perfect being, 2. Necessary existence is a perfection, 3. Therefore, a supremely perfect being exists), among other weaknesses, makes an impossible and unjustified move from the mental world of concepts to the real (actual) world of things. Contrary to this opinion, I will try to show that the famous Descartes's principle of clear and distinct perception suffices to find an adequate inferential connection between the contents of the human mind and extra-mental reality. Existence is always part of the idea of everything that we clearly and distinctly perceive: possible existence is part of our clear and distinct idea of every finite being and necessary existence is part of the idea of a supremely perfect being (God). If we wanted to negate the epistemic value of Descartes's principle of clear and distinct perception, we would have to become skeptical about even our most fundamental 'insights' that we normally accept in mathematics, logic and other areas of the so-called *a priori* knowledge. According the rule of truth from the Fifth Meditation, whatever someone clearly and distinctly perceives of something is true of that thing and from this we have to infer that necessary existence cannot be separated from the idea of a supremely perfect being in the same way as, for example, from the idea of a triangle cannot be separated the fact that its angles equal two right angles.

Johnatan E. Lowe

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A new modal version of the ontological argument

In this paper, I present a new deductively valid argument for the existence of a necessary concrete being -- that is to say, a being that exists of necessity, or in every possible world, and also exists in time. I explain why the argument's premises should be accepted as a priori truths. I then go on to show that there are plausible reasons for attributing to such a being not only creative powers but also an infinite rational intellect.

Adam Łukasik

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Norman Malcolm's ontological argument - a new approach to the old issue

The aim of the presentation is to consider two innovative points of Norman Malcolm's defense of the ontological argument. The first novelty in Malcolm's approach involves the notion of necessary existence instead of ordinary one. According to Malcolm, Kant's thesis that 'existence' is not a predicate is right – that God exists cannot be proven simply by saying

that God is a perfect being and so has (actual) existence as one of His perfections. But, instead of this, Malcolm claims that 'necessary existence' can be considered as a predicate and that this opens a way to formulate a sound ontological argument. God has necessary existence because it is more perfect to exist necessarily than to exist contingently. God existing contingently would not be an unlimited being, as Malcolm claims Him to be; if God existed contingently His existing would have some start and some end or it would be thinkable that it could have some start and some end – God would have some limits then. On the other hand, it cannot be said either that God has a necessary non-existence (because the notion of God is a coherent one). God's having necessary existence means for Malcolm that God necessarily exists and that entails that God exists.

The second novelty of Malcolm's account is employing Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, especially the notion of language games, to the issue in question. This innovation is closely connected to the former. Malcolm claims that God is conceived as a necessary being (a being possessing necessary existence) in Christian and Jewish religious language games. It is in these language games that 'necessary existence' is considered as a predicate and a proposition stating that God exists – as necessary, despite Hume's and Kant's objection that every existential proposition is contingent. An important role of pointing at some particular language games is here legitimating coherence of a notion of necessary existent God. The fact that that notion functions well in everyday life of religious language communities, having some role in it, is a fine testimony of its coherence for Malcolm.

Uwe Meixner

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First Causes

Though Kant distinguished the “ontological proof” for the existence of God from the “cosmological proof”, the latter is, rightly considered, as much an ontological proof as the former, since the “cosmological proof”, too, makes use only of ontological concepts (but certainly not all of the principles it appeals to are analytic). The (so-called) cosmological proof crucially employs the notion of first cause. The paper will analyze this notion in the perspective of event-causation and of agent-causation, it will explore the usefulness of first causes for the analysis of human and divine free action, and it will give reasons for believing in the existence of first causes (in an argument that, though not a proof, will yet be a reasonable argument).

Yujin Nagasawa

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A systematic modeling of Anselmian theism

The ontological argument is based on the so-called Anselmian thesis, according to which God is that than which no greater can be thought. This thesis has been widely accepted among traditional theists and it has for several hundred years been a central notion whenever philosophers debate the existence and nature of God. Proponents of the thesis have been silent, however, about exactly what it means to say that God is that than which no greater can be thought. The aim of this paper is to offer an answer to this question by providing a rigorous, systematic model of the Anselmian thesis. The most straightforward model, which I

call the ‘Linear Model’, says that God is that than which no greater can be thought by virtue of occupying the top link in the ‘great chain of being’, a universal linear ranking of all possible beings. Most contemporary philosophers believe, however, that the Linear Model does not succeed because the notion of the great chain of being is untenable. I therefore explore alternatives to the Linear Model. I argue that what I call the ‘Extended Radial Model’ characterizes the Anselmian thesis correctly, even though the model faces a powerful objection. I argue further that the Linear Model should be taken seriously as a backup option for Anselmian theists because (i) it is not vulnerable to the objection that the Extended Radial Model faces and (ii) what is widely regarded as a knock-down objection to the Linear Model is not as compelling as some have claimed.

Maciej Nowicki

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Anselm's proof is not ontological

One of the key problems concerning Anselm’s so-called ontological argument relies upon an appropriate analysis of the *cogitari possit* modality. The modality occurs not only in the “definition” of God or on all the stages of the argument, but is omnipresent in the entire Proslogion and can be found in some other Anselm’s works. The characteristics of the modality was of concern for readers of the proof since its very origins, let us mention only Gaunilo or Thomas Aquinas. The history of the argument’s reception shows however that, following Leibniz, philosophers have mostly focused on the problem of consistency and possibility of God which resulted in neglecting the original (Anselmian) character of the modality. The paper consists of two parts. In the beginning I will focus on a brief analysis of the *cogitari possit* modality and its key role in Anselm’s argument. In particular, I will show that his understanding of classical modalities (possibility and necessity) combined with the epistemic factor (*cogitatio*) as well as his distinction of ways of predications excludes traditional interpretations of the phrase “aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit” as a definition of God.

Richard Swinburne

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What kind of necessary being could God be?

I understand by ‘metaphysical’ necessity and impossibility the strongest kinds of necessity and impossibility; and so by ‘metaphysical’ possibility the weakest kind of possibility. I understand by ‘logical’ necessity etc, metaphysical necessity etc determinable a priori. Necessity etc belong primarily to sentences. A sentence is logically necessary if its negation entails a contradiction, and I see no reason to believe that there are any logically necessary sentences other than such sentences. An a posteriori metaphysically necessary sentence is one which reduces to a logically necessary sentence when we replace uninformative rigid designators by informative designators (these being ones which pick out substances etc in virtue of their essence). A negative existential sentence cannot entail a contradiction, and so ‘There is a God’ cannot be metaphysically necessary. Only if we suppose that necessity etc belong primarily to propositions which exist and have a truth value eternally and independently of human language, could it make sense to suppose that ‘God

exists' is metaphysically necessary, and so that God is a metaphysically necessary being. But the fact that God cannot be a metaphysically necessary being has no relevance to the possibility of God being and being shown to be a being necessary in the sense that his essence is such that he is not causally contingent on anything.

Mirosław Szatkowski
Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland

A characterization of Anderson-like ontological proofs from semantical and ontological points of view.

Three types of semantics for Anderson-like ontological proofs are considered, namely, free objectional semantics, free intensional semantics and counterpart one. The first type involves existing objects and intensional properties as domains of the first and the second order of quantification, respectively. The second involves intensional objects and intensional properties as domains of the first and the second order of quantification, respectively. And counterpart semantics uses existing objects and existing properties as domains of the first and the second order of quantification, respectively. The last type focuses on the notion of *counterpart*, which - as a consequence of the metaphysical view that nothing can exist in more than one possible world - is a substitute for identity between things in different worlds, and the *extensionalization of modal discourse*, obtained by translating modal operators into quantification over possible worlds and counterparts. We do not require that different worlds contain distinct sets of objects and distinct sets of properties. Finally, we discuss the ontological assumptions of the three kinds of semantics.

Kordula Świątorzecka
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Kurt Gödel's "Ontologischer Beweis". Its interpretation not restricted to possible worlds with constant domains

A manuscript of K. Gödel from 2 February 1970 with a sketched ontological proof for the existence of God, was published for the first time in the article of J. H. Sobel in 1987 „Gödel's ontological proof” (in: *On Being and Saying. Essays for Richard Cartwright*). Since that time it has been an object of many analyses. The way of construction of Gödel's argument places it in a group of ontological proofs in Cartesian style – in such proofs the Absolute is understood as *the subject of all perfections* – i.e. as such a perfection which also *implies* the possession of all other perfections. This main idea of Gödel's proof could be, however, clarified in different ways. Gödel's source text is written in symbolic language, it is fragmentary, and it might be filled to obtain different versions of argumentation.

In the paper, we are going to consider one of the most popular reconstructions of the theory of *summum bonum* – the formalization by D. Scott. In connection with the description of perfections (*positive properties*) proposed by Scott, at first we are going to check if it is necessary to use in the proof of the main thesis some modal tools considered very controversial. First, we will consider the problem of using the modal rules of inference which are pointed to as a cause of the so-called *modal fallacy*. We will describe the already known

modification of Scott's version without such rules. Second, in the considered proof we will also point to the role of Barcan formula, which is recognized by many philosophers as the cause of indistinguishability of *de re* and *de dicto* modalities. Finally, we will analyze Gödel's theory in connection with the problem of *transworld identity of individuals*. We will try to formulate the thesis of transworld identity of the Absolute and to point out the deductive minimum to prove it.

Daniel von Wachter

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If God's existence is logically necessary, then it is not necessary

That a statement is logically necessary means that its negation is self-contradictory. But there is another phenomenon which, in accordance with ordinary usage, deserves to be called necessity. It is so different from the 'logical necessity' that it alone, not 'logical necessity', should be called 'necessity'. That 'God does not exist' is self-contradictory therefore does not make it true to say that God's existence is necessary.

Paul Weingartner

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The premises of Anselm's argument

The paper considers two aspects of Anselm's argument (in the Proslogion): (1) Does the argument start with a concrete and contingent empirical premise? This question is not inadequate, since Anselm introduces the proof with the claim that even the fool understands the description: God is that thing than which nothing greater can be conceived. And what he (the fool) understands is (exists) in his mind. It will be shown that if one reconstructs the proof with this premise, it is suitable to use intuitionistic logic for the argument. (2) Are the premises self-evident in the sense of Aquinas or analytic in the sense of Kant? It will be shown that not all of them are within the definition of being self-evident (analytic) which seems adequate in that tradition.

William J. Wainwright

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Assessing ontological arguments

Section I contends that philosophical proofs in general are "person-relative." A modal ontological argument can thus be a good argument for one person, yet not for another. The person-relativity of ontological arguments and other proofs of the existence of God has several sources, the two most important of which are perhaps these: (1) the classical God proofs are embedded in larger cumulative case arguments which convince some but not others, and (2) these wider arguments typically incorporate appeals to epistemic, aesthetic, and moral values the acceptance of which crucially depends upon the state of one's heart or what William James called our "passional nature"-- our temperament, needs, concerns, hopes,

fears, passions, and deepest intuitions. Section II illustrates these points by examining the modal ontological argument's possibility premise ("It is logically possible that God exists") with special attention to the recent literature on the reliability of our modal intuitions.

Jan Woleński

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Was Gaunilo right in his criticism of Anselm? A contemporary perspective

Gaunilo argued that Anselm could prove the existence of many perfect objects, for example, the happiest island, that is, happier than any other island. More formally, Gaunilo's arguments were intended to show that the sentence "God exists" does not follow from premises accepted by Anselm. Contemporary versions of the ontological proof use the maximalization procedure in order to demonstrate that God exists as the most perfect being. This paper argues that this method, that is based on maximalization, is not sufficient to prove God's existence. Thus, a "contemporary Gaunilo" can repeat the objections raised by his ancestor.

Irenusz Ziemiński

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What is the ontological argument? Some remarks on Nicolas Rescher's argument

Rescher's reasoning from his article *The ontological proof revisited* (1959) is not an ontological argument by Kant's definition, since it neither treats existence as a predicate nor does it prove God's existence based on the content of the concept of God. Nor is it a formal deductive reasoning where the conclusion logically results from the premises. It is rather an illustration of the fundamental meaning of ontological proofs, which are a semantic rule determining the use of the word "God" rather than a way of settling the dispute between theism and atheism.

According to Rescher, the term "God" is indefinable. Its content may only be grasped in a religious experience, which at the same time is also the ground for acknowledging the existence of God; therefore if someone refuses the existence of God, he shows that he wrongly grasped the meaning of the word "God". This means that the term "God" has a specific grammar; using it we must also admit the existence of a referring object, or we shouldn't use it at all. This suggests that it is only valid in one specific (religious) language game.

Rescher's argument does not prove the existence of God; therefore, it doesn't settle the discussion between theism and atheism in favour of theism. It may however be treated as an illustration of the belief that this dispute is impossible to settle by rational argumentation but only by experience. So, someone who has a religious experience has the right to acknowledge God's existence; someone who does not have such an experience, doesn't have the grounds to admit that God exists either.