Kant’s objections to the Ontological Argument
Worksheet 2

Source

Here, Peter Van Inwagen argues against Kant’s second objection (existence isn’t a predicate) by arguing that necessary existence is a predicate.

... the Kantian refutation of the argument is at best a point about a peripheral fault in the argument. Let us consider the idea of necessary existence. A thing has necessary existence if it would have existed no matter what, and if it would have existed under any possible circumstances. An equivalent definition is this: A thing has necessary existence if its non-existence would have been impossible. ... It is obvious that you and I do not possess necessary existence: we should never have existed if our respective sets of parents happened never to have met, and that is certainly a 'possible circumstance' ... even an object that has, by everyday standards, a really impressive grip on existence – Mount Everest, say – lacks necessary existence: Mount Everest would not have existed if the Indian subcontinent had not drifted into contact with Asia. ... These reflections make it clear that necessary existence is a property, in just the sense that mere existence is not (if Kant is right) a property.


Analysis

What do you think?

1. What do you think of Van Inwagen’s argument?

2. What do you think of Kant’s criticism of the Ontological Argument? Is it sound?