

**THE QUIRKS AND TURNS IN THE EIGHTH
PARAGRAPH OF KANT'S CHAPTER ON
THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT**

Kemp Smith's translation of what in his translation is the third sentence in the eighth paragraph of Kant's chapter on the ontological argument runs as follows :

If that (i.e. introducing the concept of existence into the concept of a thing which we profess to be thinking solely in reference to its possibility) be allowed as legitimate, a seeming victory has been won; but in actual fact nothing at all is said : the assertion is a mere tautology.¹

Owing to the semi-colon after 'has been won' it is natural to take it that the consequent which goes with the antecedent 'if that be allowed as legitimate' is 'a seeming victory has been won' and that 'but in actual fact nothing at all has been said : the assertion is a mere tautology' is a statement of what is the case given, as Kant wishes to assert, that it is not legitimate to introduce the concept of existence into the concept of a thing which we profess to be thinking solely in reference to its possibility. Furthermore, it seems that the only proposition back to which the expression 'the assertion' could refer is the assertion that existence lies in the concept of a thing which we profess to be thinking solely with respect to its possibility. However, in the previous sentence Kant said that this assertion involves a contradiction. Thus identifying this assertion with the assertion referred to in the present sentence commits us to say that Kant is saying that one and the same assertion can both involve a contradiction and be a tautology.

However a literal translation from the German runs thus :

If one allows you this (i.e. to bring into the concept of a thing which you merely wished to suppose to be possible the concept of its existence) then you have in appearance won the game but in fact said nothing; for you have committed a mere tautology.

It is clear that the consequent which goes with the antecedent 'If one allows you this' is not 'then you have in appearance won the game.' The consequent comprises all of 'then you have in appearance won the game but in fact said nothing.'

Perhaps it includes 'for you have committed a mere tautology.' I believe that a scrutiny of paragraph eight as a whole reveals that Kant would assert categorically that a propounder of the argument has said nothing but has committed a mere tautology. However, the above-quoted sentence, unlike Kemp Smith's translation, does not convey the impression that this categorical assertion is based on Kant's belief that one ought not to allow a propounder of the ontological argument to bring into the concept of a thing which he merely wished to suppose to be possible the concept of its existence. In fact an examination of the argument which Kant gives in support of his categorical assertion that a propounder of the ontological argument has said nothing but has committed a mere tautology shows that this categorical assertion is *not* based on Kant's belief that one ought not to allow a propounder of the ontological argument to bring into the concept of a thing which he merely supposed to be possible the concept of its existence.

Thus, contrary to the impression conveyed by Kemp Smith's translation, paragraph eight contains not one but two objections and these objections are entirely independent of each other. The first objection is stated in the first sentence of the paragraph, and the whole of the rest of the paragraph is devoted to the second objection.

Note further that the final clause of the present sentence *contra* Kemp Smith is not 'the assertion is a mere tautology' but 'for you have committed a mere tautology'. Thus, contrary to what one would infer from Kemp Smith's translation, there is no pressure to take it that the assertion which Kant is calling a tautology is an assertion which Kant has just asserted. This pressure together with the fact that Kemp Smith's translation suggested that Kant's ground for saying that the propounder of the argument has committed a mere tautology is that the propounder should not be allowed to introduce the concept of existence into the concept of a thing which we profess to be thinking solely in reference to its

possibility is what made Kemp Smith's translation suggest that the assertion which Kant is saying is a mere tautology is the proposition that the concept of existence lies in the concept of a thing which we profess to be thinking solely with reference to its possibility.

An examination of what Kant goes on to say shows that the assertion which in the last clause of the last-quoted sentence Kant says is a mere tautology is not any assertion he has just stated, but the assertion which the propounder of the ontological argument makes simultaneously with coming to believe that he has won the game—viz. the assertion of the conclusion of the ontological argument (viz. the conclusion that the most real being exists).

It seems that Kant's ground for saying that the assertion that the most real being exists is a mere tautology is, in outline, that a certain combination of answers to a certain pair of questions concerning what the propounder of the ontological argument believes and what his premises amount to, which combination of answers according to Kant entails that the propounder's conclusion that the most real being exists is a mere tautology, is more plausible than any alternative combination of answers to the pair of questions.

The pair of questions to which I have alluded are—

1. Does the propounder of the ontological argument hold that the judgment 'The most real being exists' is analytic or synthetic ?

and

2. When the propounder of the ontological argument asserts as his conclusion 'The most real being exists', is the existence of which he speaks real existence or merely possible existence ?

Before discussing Kant's answers to these questions, I will have to distinguish between two senses of the expression 'analytic judgment'—viz. 'judgment the predicate of which is contained in the subject-concept of which' and 'judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis'. To see the distinction between these two senses of 'analytic judgment', consider the judgment 'Some bachelors are male'. The predicate is contained

in the subject-concept. However, the judgment is not discoverable to be true by means of an act of analysis, for the following reason : It is a particular judgment, and so has existential import. An analysis of the subject-concept cannot reveal whether the subject-concept has instances. Therefore an analysis of the subject-concept cannot reveal whether the judgment is true. Kant defines 'analytic judgment' as 'judgment the predicate of which is contained in the subject-concept of which' at A6—B9. However in A151 B190 Kant says

if the judgment is analytic.....its truth must be capable of being known in accordance with the principle of contradiction. This is only true if 'analytic judgment' is taken in the sense 'judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis'. I will now discuss Kant's answers to the above mentioned two questions.

Kant very quickly concludes right at the end of the paragraph that the most plausible answer to the first question is that the propounder of the ontological argument holds that the judgment 'The most real being exists' is analytic. Kant's ground for holding that this is the most plausible answer is that the propounder of the argument is committed to say this by the fact that he is committed to say that the predicate of 'The most real being exists' cannot be rejected without contradiction. As will be clear from what I say below the sense of 'analytic judgment' in which Kant, for the purposes of his argument, has to show that a propounder of the ontological argument is committed to say that 'The most real being exists' is analytic, is 'judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis'. However, it is only if by 'analytic judgment' is meant 'judgment the predicate of which is contained in the subject-concept of which' that the proposition that the predicate of 'The most real being exists' cannot be rejected (whilst one retains the subject) without contradiction entails the proposition that 'The most real being exists' is analytic.

In the course of his argument to show that it must be the case that a propounder of the ontological argument holds that 'The most real being exists' is analytic Kant says that every reasonable person must admit that all existential propositions are synthetic. As Ray Pinkerton says,² and *contra* Jonathon Bennett,³ this remark

about reasonable persons is merely an aside. Kant does not appeal to a consensus among reasonable people that all existential propositions are synthetic in support of the proposition that all existential propositions are synthetic. In fact the proposition that all existential propositions are synthetic plays no role at all in any of Kant's objections to the ontological argument (as Pinkerton would say).

It might be thought, however, that the proposition that all existential propositions are synthetic is obviously true, and entails the proposition that no concept contains the concept of existence. In paragraph ten Kant gives two arguments to show that existence is not a real predicate. The second of these two arguments would if sound show that existence is not contained in any concept which can have particular objects, as instances of it—i.e., in Frege's terminology, is not contained in any first-order concept. Thus, it might be supposed that the proposition that all existential propositions are synthetic supports the proposition which Kant's second argument in paragraph ten would if sound support. 'I will not here deal with the question of whether the proposition' that all existential propositions are synthetic is a good ground for believing the proposition that existence is not contained in any first-order concept. I will merely note that (a) the latter proposition is only entailed by the proposition that all existential propositions are synthetic if by 'analytic proposition' is meant 'proposition the predicate of which is contained in the subject-concept of which' while (b) the proposition that all existential propositions are synthetic is *obviously* true only if by 'analytic proposition' is meant 'proposition which is discoverable to be true by means of an act of analysis.'

A bit higher up in the paragraph Kant argues that it would follow from the proposition that the propounder of the ontological argument holds that the judgment 'The most real being exists' is analytic that the most charitable answer to the question of whether the existence which the propounder of the ontological argument in his conclusion ascribes to the most real being is real existence or merely possible existence is that it is most charitable to say that he is ascribing merely possible existence to the most real being.

Kant's argument for this is as follows:

If it (the proposition that this or that thing exists) is the former (i.e. analytic), then you add nothing to your thought of the thing through the existence of the thing, but in that case either the thought, which is in you, must be the thing itself, or you have presupposed an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible and have then on that pretext inferred existence from inner possibility, which is nothing but a miserable tautology.

When Kant says

but in that case (i.e., if you add nothing to your thought of the thing through the existence of the thing) either the thought, which is in you, must be the thing itself, or you have presupposed an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible and have then on that pretext inferred existence from inner possibility, which is nothing but a miserable tautology

I presume that he means that if you add nothing to your thought of the thing through the existence of the thing then (a) if the existence one ascribes to the thing is real existence then the thing which one is asserting to exist would be identical with one's concept of it (which Kant would say is ridiculous) while (b) if the existence which one is ascribing to the thing is merely possible existence, then in the ontological argument when one infers

1,2,3,7(9) The most real being exists

from (among other premisses)

2 (2) 'and you are entitled to accept such a being (as the most real being) as possible' (A 596 — B 624)

the conclusion of one's inference is a miserable tautology. Kant would say that (b) is true quite independently of whether through asserting a thing to exist one does not add anything to one's concept of the thing.

In the clauses

and have on that pretext inferred existence from inner possibility, which is nothing but a miserable tautology. which in the German run thus

und alsdenn dem Vorgeben nach das Dasein aus der inneren Möglichkeit geschlossen, welches nichts als eine elende Tautologie ist.

I have taken it that 'which' refers back to the reference of 'existence', and not to the inference from possibility to existence. I have done this because in the next two sentences Kant seems to give arguments designed to show not that an inference from the possibility of a thing to its possible existence is a miserable tautologous sequent, but that 'The most real being exists' is a miserable tautology. The German word of which 'which' is a translation (viz. 'welches') is neuter, and the German word of which 'existence' is at translation (viz. 'Dasein') is the last neuter noun to occur before 'welches'.

I can't see why, if Kant thinks that it follows from the proposition that you do not add anything through the *real* existence of a thing to your thought of the thing that the concept is the thing itself, he should not think that it follows from the proposition that you do not add anything through the *possible* existence of the thing to your thought of the thing that the concept is the thing itself. Hence, I presume that what Kant really wants to say is that if through the existence of the thing one does not add anything to one's thought of the thing, then the thing one is asserting to exist would be identical with one's thought of it, and if the existence referred to is real existence then this is an unacceptable consequence.

Kant concludes from this, via the principle of charity, that the existence which the propounder of the ontological argument ascribes to the most real being is possible existence.

Kant concludes from (a) the proposition that its being the case that 'The most real being exists' is analytic would, if the existence mentioned in the sentence were real existence, have an unacceptable consequence, together with (b) the principle of charity and (c) the proposition that a propounder of the ontological argument holds that 'The most real being exists' is analytic, that the existence referred to by the propounder of the ontological argument in his conclusion "The most real being exists" is merely possible existence.

Suppose that when Kant says that that if the proposition that this or that thing is analytic then you add *nothing* to your thought of the thing *through the existence of the thing* he means that if such

a proposition were analytic then you would add *no concept* to your thought of the thing *through asserting that it exists*. If Kant means this then what he is saying is true. (Provided that by 'analytic judgment' is meant 'judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis performed on its subject-concept'. I have argued that a propounder of the ontological argument is committed to say that 'The most real being exists' is analytic in this sense.) However, Kant's belief that for it to be the case that you add nothing to your thought of a thing through the existence of the thing *it would have to be the case that your thought of the thing is identical with the thing* would be false. Also Kant would be implying in the long sentence I have been discussing that in fact you do add a concept to your thought of a thing through asserting that it exists. This directly contradicts

nothing can be added to the concept... through my thinking its object as given absolutely (A599—B627)

— i.e. the doctrine that existence is not a real predicate.

Hence there is some pressure to take it that Kant means by 'you add *nothing* to your thought of the thing *through the existence of the thing*' something other than 'you add *no concept* to your thought of the thing *through asserting that it exists*.' An alternative interpretation is 'the proposition that a thing answering to your thought exists does not entail the existence of anything the existence of which is not entailed by the proposition that your thought exists'. On this interpretation Kant in implying that you do add something to your thought of a thing through the existence of the thing would not be contradicting his doctrine that existence is not a real predicate. Furthermore, his belief that for it to be the case that you add nothing to your thought of a thing through the existence of the thing it would have to be the case that the thought of the thing is identical with the thing would seem to be true. Also, if by 'analytic judgment' is meant 'judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis performed on its subject-concept', then perhaps it could be said that Kant's assertion that if the proposition that this or that thing exists were analytic then you add nothing to your thought of the thing through the existence of the thing would be true. If it were discoverable that a thing which instantiates a concept exists simply by contemplating the concept then it seems that it would be the

case that the proposition that the thing answering to the concept exists would not entail the existence of anything the existence of which is not entailed by the proposition that the concept exists.

It is of course very whimsical of Kant to conclude *from* the proposition that (a) if the existence which the propounder of the ontological argument has in mind in his conclusion 'The most real being exists' were real existence then he would be committed to say that his thought of the most real being is identical with the most real being and that (b) this is an unacceptable consequence, *that* the existence which the propounder of the ontological argument has in mind his conclusion 'The most real being exists' is possible existence (and hence that the conclusion is a miserable tautology). The above propositions from which Kant derives the proposition that the existence which the propounder of the ontological argument has in mind is possible existence do give some degree of support to this proposition. However, this degree of support is of course well and truly outweighed by our knowledge that the propounder of the argument thinks he has proven a much more exciting proposition than that God possibly exists.

Kant should therefore have stated the point he is trying to make in this second objection as that if the ontological argument were sound then its conclusion 'The most real being exists' would be an analytic judgment in the sense 'judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis', and that for this to be the case it would have to be the case that the most real being is identical with the thought of him.

This proposition is true. It shows that *something* must be wrong with the ontological argument. However, it doesn't indicate *what* is wrong with the ontological argument.

My construal of the long sentence 'If it (the proposition that this or that thing exists) is the former (an analytic proposition), then.....' involved taking it that Kant holds that if the only existence ascribed to a thing is possible existence then the proposition that the thought of the thing (which is in you) is the thing itself is unobjectionable. Thus, I am committed to say that Kant is here identifying a *possibile* which is not actual with the thought of the

possibile. Of course a *possibile* is not identical with the thought of it.

However, Kant's error in identifying a non-actual *possibile* with the thought of the *possibile* does not vitiate the above-mentioned point which Kant ought to be making -viz., that if the ontological argument were sound then its conclusion 'The most real being exists' would be an analytic judgment in the sense 'judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis', and that for this to be the case it would have to be the case that the most real being (whom the conclusion asserts to have real existence) is identical with the thought of him.

I mentioned that the two sentences which follow the above-mentioned long sentence contain arguments to show that the conclusion of the ontological argument 'The most real being exists' is a miserable tautology. A demonstration of this is of course superfluous to the above-mentioned point which Kant ought to be making.

Nevertheless I will discuss the two sentences because they are an excellent illustration of how haywire Kant's reasoning was. Here is the first of the two sentences :

The word : reality, which in the concept of the thing sounds other than existence in the concept of the predicate, does not amount to it⁴ (i.e., I presume, does not amount to something other than existence in the concept of the predicate)

Perhaps Kant's making out that the word 'reality' is 'in the concept of the thing' indicates that the sentence he has in mind is 'The being which has every reality exists', which Kant would say is equivalent to the sentence 'The most real being exists'.

The last quoted sentence from paragraph eight is perplexing. I said above that Kant in the sentences preceding the last-quoted sentence is arguing that the existence referred to by the predicate-expression of the conclusion of the ontological argument ('The most real being exists') is *possible* existence (and hence that the conclusion is a miserable tautology). However, it seems that the

last-quoted sentence could only be true if the existence referred to by the predicate-expression 'exists' in the conclusion of the ontological argument refers to *actual* existence, for the following reason: One would presume that if 'reality' in the last-quoted sentence from paragraph eight is being used in a usual sense (instead of being used to mean 'perfection') then it is being used to refer to actual reality rather than possible reality. However, if 'reality' in the last-quoted sentence is being used to refer to actual reality and 'existence' in the last-quoted sentence is being used to refer to possible existence, then the proposition expressed by the last-quoted sentence — viz. the proposition that the concept referred to by the attributive adjective 'real' in the subject expression 'The most real being' does not amount to something other than the concept referred to by the predicate-expression 'exists' — is false. It would be so obviously false that it seems that if 'reality' in the last-quoted sentence is being used in a usual sense, then 'existence' in this sentence must be being used to refer to actual existence. One might be inclined to say that 'reality' in the last-quoted sentence cannot be being used in a usual sense, but must be being used to mean 'perfection', since this was the sense in which Kant was using 'reality' in his paraphrase of the ontological argument, and hence must be the sense in which it is used in the sentence to which Kant alludes in the last-quoted sentence — viz. the conclusion of the ontological argument 'The most real being exists'. However, if 'reality' in the last-quoted sentence is being used to mean 'perfection', then, regardless of whether 'existence' in this sentence is being used to refer to actual existence or possible existence, the last quoted sentence — viz.

The word : reality, which in the concept of the subject sounds other than existence in the concept of the predicate, does not amount to it (i.e., I presume, does not amount to something other than existence in the concept of the predicate)

— is false. Existence may be a perfection, but existence is certainly not *identical with* perfection. This is so obvious that I feel obliged to conclude that Kant in the above sentence has somehow managed to forget in what sense he was using 'reality' in his paraphrase of the ontological argument, and in the above sentence is not using 'reality' to refer to perfection, but is instead using 'reality' in a usual sense. I mentioned above that if 'reality' is being used

in a usual sense then one would presume that it is being used to refer to actual reality rather than possible reality. I argued above that if Kant in the above sentence is using 'reality' to refer to actual reality, then it seems that he must be using 'existence' to refer to actual existence. If so, then not merely has Kant in the last-quoted sentence managed to forget in what sense he was using the word 'reality' in his paraphrase of the ontological argument, but he has also managed to forget that in the sentences immediately preceding the last-quoted sentence he was arguing that the existence referred to by the predicate expression 'exists' in the conclusion of the ontological argument is possible existence. Thus, I seem obliged to conclude that the last-quoted sentence is an embarrassed and very ill-considered insertion.

Kant of course wishes to conclude from the proposition that the reality referred to in the subject expression in the sentence 'The most real being exists' does not amount to something other than the existence referred to by the predicate expression that this sentence is a miserable tautology.

Here is the next sentence :

For, if you also call all positing (regardless of what you posit) reality, then you have already posited and assumed as actual the thing with all its predicates in the concept of the subject, and in the predicate you only repeat it.

Note that whereas my translation suggests that the phrase 'in the concept of the subject' qualifies 'predicates', this suggestion is not conveyed by the German. I presume that the phrase modifies 'have..... posited and accepted as actual.'

Contrary to what is implied by the 'For' with which the sentence is prefixed, the sentence (at least on the account of it which I am about to give) could not possibly support the previous sentence (which asserted that the reality referred to in the subject-expression of 'The most real being exists' does not amount to something other than the existence referred to by the predicate expression). The only thing which the latest sentence could possibly do is entail (and entail immediately) the proposition that any proposition which has possible existence as its predicate is a miserable tautology.

Kant is implying in the last quoted sentence that in the usual sense of 'reality' not all positing is reality, and that reality is a subspecies of positing. I presume that Kant would say that in a case of positing which is not reality in the usual sense the thing posited is a *possibile*. Thus, I presume that when Kant says, 'if you call all positing (regardless of what you posit) reality, then.....' he means by 'to posit a thing' to come to believe that the thing subsists (in the Meinongian sense) or has actual existence. If so then (contrary to what Kant is implying) *reality* in the usual sense is not a subspecies of positing. *Coming to believe that something is real-in-the-usual-sense* would be a subspecies of positing.

Kant makes out that if you call all positing reality then you have already posited the thing in the concept of the subject. However, if Kant were using 'to posit' in the consequent of this assertion in the same sense as that in which he uses it in the antecedent of the assertion he would be committed to say that the consequent is true quite independently of whether the antecedent is true. Hence, I presume that in the consequent he has slid to using 'to posit x' to mean 'to come to believe that x is real-in-the-usual-sense (i.e., that x has actual existence).' I suspect that Kant was at least partly caused to make this slide by its being the case that having assigned to 'to posit x' the function of expressing 'to come to believe that x subsists (in the Meinongian sense) or else has actual existence' Kant would have had no convenient word with which to express 'to come to believe that x has actual existence i.e., is real-in-the-usual-sense' if he had not made the slide.

Thus I believe that in the sentence I have been discussing—viz. :

if you..... call all positing..... reality, then you have
already posited and assumed as actual the thing with all its
predicates in the concept of the subject

it would be better to simply omit 'posited' and allow the expression which Kant seems to make out is equivalent to 'posited' (viz. 'assumed as actual') to convey what is meant.

I presume that Kant's ground for saying :

if you..... call all positing..... reality then you have

alreadyassumed as actual the thing and all its predicates in the concept of the subject, and in the predicate you only repeat it.

is as follows : If you even call asserting a thing to be possible asserting it to be real or actual then in merely implying the actuality of the subject-concept of a judgment of the form 'X exists' you have assumed the actuality of a thing answering to the description 'X'. If you even call asserting anything to be possible a species of asserting it to be real or actual, then in merely implying the actuality of the *subject-concept* of a judgment of the form 'X exists' you have assumed the actuality of a thing which instantiates the concept, since the existence of a concept is sufficient for the possibility of a thing which instantiates the concept (and you have said that you would call possibility a species of actuality). As I have mentioned, Kant does not hold that the existence of a concept is sufficient for the possibility of an object which instantiates the concept. However, Kant supposes that a propounder of the ontological argument relies on the existence of a concept being sufficient for the possibility of an object which instantiates the concept, and has said in paragraph seven that for the time being he would waive the objection that it is not sufficient. Thus, it seems likely that Kant in the present sentence is putting forward the objection I have just sketched, but as an *ad hominem* objection.

I have taken it that when Kant says '... then you have alreadyassumed as actual the thing and all its predicates *in the concept of the subject*' (italics mine) he means that *in assuming that the concept of the subject is actual* one is assuming that the thing is actual. Perhaps a more natural interpretation of the words 'in the concept of the subject' is to take it that they are intended to convey that the concept of the subject is identical with the thing which instantiates it of which Kant speaks. In the sentence 'Australia had its greatest batsman in Bradman' there is an adverbial phrase consisting of the proposition 'in' followed by a singular term. The phrase serves to indicate that the reference of the singular term in the phrase is identical with the reference of the direct object of the verb modified by the adverbial phrase. Perhaps the phrase 'in the concept of the subject' functions in this way in
if you..... call all positing..... reality, then you have

alreadyassumed as actual the thing and all its predicates in the concept of the subject

and hence indicates that the thing of which Kant speaks (which is an instance of the concept of the subject) is identical with the concept of the subject. When Kant makes out that the propounder of the ontological argument has already assumed as actual the thing and all its predicates Kant would say that that to which what the propounder of the argument has already done amounts to have assumed the *possibility* of the thing and all its predicates. In virtue of this the above interpretation of 'in the concept of the subject' which involves taking it that Kant is saying that the thing of which Kant speaks (which is an instance of the concept of the subject) is identical with the concept of the subject, is plausible, for the following reason: In the long sentence 'If it (the proposition that this or that thing exists) is the former (i.e. analytic) then.....' Kant made out that a concept is identical with a non-actual *possibile* which instantiates it (as I mentioned above, pp.317-8).

That it should be the case (a) that the proposition that the subject-concept of a sentence of the form 'X exists' entails that an object answering to the description 'X' exists or (b) that the subject concept is identical with a thing answering to the description 'X' does not entail that the sentence of the form 'X exists' is a tautology, since neither (a) nor (b) entails that the predicate existence is contained in the subject-concept. However, although, regardless of whether in asserting the proposition 'you have already assumed as actual the thing and all its predicates in the concept of the subject' Kant is asserting (b) or merely (a) this proposition does not entail that 'The most real being exists' is a miserable *tautology*, the proposition does entail that the conclusion 'The most real being exists' does not entail anything which a person who believes that there is a concept which is expressed by the expression 'the most real being' does not already believe, and hence that the conclusion is *miserable*.

A propounder of the ontological argument would of course say that his conclusion 'The most real being exists' is a tautology, albeit not a miserable one. Indeed it is not miserable, even if we assume that it is a tautology. However, the reason for this is that

it has existential import. The fact that it has existential import is the very reason why it would not follow from the proposition being a tautology that it is discoverable to be true by means of an act of analysis. Note that in the paragraphs on whether existence is a real predicate Kant tries to show that real existence is not contained in any concept. This could only be relevant to the ontological argument if, contrary to what Kant says in paragraph eight, the existence of which the propounder of the ontological argument speaks is not merely possible existence, but real existence. Also, it would entail that (assuming that the existence of which the propounder of the ontological argument speaks is real existence) 'The most real being exists' is *not* a tautology.

Here ends my discussion of the two sentences designed to demonstrate that the conclusion- 'The most real being exists' is a miserable tautology. As I mentioned above (p.318), a demonstration of this is superfluous to the making of the point which Kant ought to be making — viz. that if the ontological argument were sound then its conclusion 'The most real being exists' would be an analytic judgment in the sense 'a judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis', and for this to be the case the most real being (whom the conclusion asserts to have real existence) would have to be identical with the thought of him.

Poor old Brand X doesn't know very much German, and as a result Kemp Smith has in paragraph eight left him in the lurch. Instead of throwing up his hands in horror at utter nonsense engendered by a blundering old fuddy-duddy of a translator, we find Pinkerton adopting towards paragraph-eight-as-translated the same deferential tone which he always adopts towards propositions which he believes to have been penned by his hero.

Pinkerton⁵ quotes Kemp Smith's translation of the long sentence in which Kant (a) argues that if the propounder of the ontological argument maintains that his conclusion 'The most real being exists' is analytic then the existence to which the propounder refers in his conclusion must be possible existence, and (b) asserts that it would follow from this that the conclusion 'The most real being exists' is a miserable tautology. But for one or two minor points, Kemp Smith's translation of this sentence is unobjectionable. Here it is :

if it (the proposition that this or that thing exists) is analytic, the assertion of the existence of the thing adds nothing to the thought of the thing, but in that case either the thought, which is in us, is the thing itself, or we have presupposed an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible, and have then, on that pretext, inferred its existence from its internal possibility — which is nothing but a miserable tautology.

Here are Pinkerton's comments⁶ on this sentence :

The point that Kant is insisting on here is that if the analytic proposition is to preserve the 'otherness' of thought and its object, the assumed possibility must be more than the mere contingency that there is an existence which instantiates the thought, but must be the necessity of such an existence, that is, it must include 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible'. But, the attempt to prove that the *ens realissimum* exists necessity fails if it relies on the prior assumption of the possibility of absolutely necessary being.

It can be seen from the second sentence I have quoted that when Pinkerton says '.....then the assumed *possibility* must be more than the mere contingency that there is an existence which instantiates the thought, but must be the necessity of such an existence.....' (italics mine), he must mean '.....then the *thing which is assumed to be possible* must be more than the mere contingency that there is an existence which instantiates the thought, but must be the necessity of such an existence,.....'.

Pinkerton takes it that when Kant says that its being the case that the conclusion 'The most real being exists' is analytic is incompatible with the otherness of the supremely perfect being and the thought of the supremely perfect being unless we have 'presupposed an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible, and have then, on that pretext, inferred its existence from its internal possibility' Kant means the following : 'The conclusion's being analytic is incompatible with the otherness of thought and object unless the thing the possibility of which is assumed in the course of the ontological argument is not the mere contingency that there is an existence which instantiates the thought of a most real being,

but the necessity of an existence which instantiates the thought of a most real being.' Thus Pinkerton must take it that Kant's clauses 'or we have presupposed an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible and have then, on that pretext, inferred its existence from its internal possibility' are intended to convey that the thing the possibility of which has been assumed in the course of the ontological argument and the existence of which is putatively proved by the ontological argument is the necessity of an existence which instantiates the thought of the most real being. Thus it seems that Pinkerton must hold that 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible' refers to the necessity of an existence which instantiates the thought of the most real being. Otherwise Kant does not anywhere in the sentence from the latter half of paragraph eight which Pinkerton quotes (or anywhere else in paragraph eight) raise the objection which Pinkerton claims that Kant is raising—viz. that an assumption of the ontological argument is that it is possible that an existence which instantiates the thought of the most real being is necessary, and that this is an unacceptable assumption.

If 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible' refers to the necessity of an existence (i.e., of a thing) which instantiates the thought of the most real being, Kant would have to mean by 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible,' not 'a subspecies of the property : existence — viz. merely possible existence' but 'a thing which belongs to the realm of the possible i.e. which is possible'. To this interpretation I have the following objection : If Kant means by 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible', 'a thing which belongs to the realm of the possible', then from the meaning of the expression one could not work out to which particular thing which belongs to the realm of the possible the expression refers. For instance, we could not work out merely from the meaning of the expression 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible', that it refers to the necessity of an existence (i.e. of a thing) which instantiates the thought of the most real being. Thus if Kant were using the expression 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible' to refer to the necessity of a thing which instantiates the thought of the most real being, there would have to be something in the context in which the expression occurs — viz. paragraph eight —

which indicates that the expression refers to the necessity of a thing which instantiates the thought of the most real being. I say this because Kant not simply expect his reader to *guess* that of all the things which belong to the realm of the possible it is the necessity of a thing which instantiates the thought of the most real being to which 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible' refers. However, there is nothing in paragraph eight which could indicate that this expression refers to the necessity of a thing which instantiates the thought of the most real being. Hence, Pinkerton's view that the expression 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible' (a) *refers to* the necessity of a thing which instantiates the thought of the most real being and (b) *means* 'a thing which belongs to the realm of the possible' is untenable, (Mr. Pinkerton has confirmed in conversation that my above interpretation of his interpretation of 'an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible' is correct.)

Here is a second objection to Pinkerton's view that in the sentence from paragraph eight which I have been discussing Kant is raising the objection that an assumption of the ontological argument is that it is possible that an existence which instantiates the thought of the *ens realissimum* is necessary and that this assumption is unacceptable :

Here again is Kemp Smith's translation of the sentence :

If it (the proposition that this or that thing exists) is analytic, the assertion of the existence of the thing adds nothing to the thought of the thing; but in that case either the thought, which is in us, is the thing itself, or we have presupposed an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible — which is nothing but a miserable tautology.

It is quite clear that the objection which Kant is raising here is that the ontological argument involves a miserable tautology. If so then, *contra* Pinkerton, the objection Kant is raising is not that the argument involves assuming to be true a proposition which cannot be assumed to be true. A miserable tautology can certainly be assumed to be true. The trouble with it is that it doesn't get you anywhere.

Here again is Pinkerton's interpretation of the sentence from the second half of paragraph eight which I have just quoted :

The point that Kant is insisting on here is that if the analytic proposition is to preserve the 'otherness' of thought and its object, then the assumed possibility must be more than the mere contingency that there is an existence which instantiates the thought, but must be the necessity of such an existence,

Pinkerton offers no explanation as to why, if 'The *ens realissimum* exists' is analytic, the thought of the *ens realissimum* would not be numerically different from the *ens realissimum* itself unless the thing assumed to be possible in the course of the ontological argument is the necessity of a thing which instantiates the thought of the *ens realissimum*. Pinkerton here is demonstrating that he has mastered a very important principle of the Critical Philosophy — viz. that if you throw utterly bewildering statements at people thick and fast enough you will stall all attempts at criticism.

Having completed his discussion of the second half of paragraph eight, Pinkerton says?

In the first half of paragraph eight Kant puts the point the other way a round. On the assumption that our ground for accepting the possibility of an *ens realissimum* is that we take absence of contradiction in the proposition that the *ens realissimum* exists as leaving us 'a free choice of admitting such a proposition, and a purely optional admission of it into the understanding' (cf. B101), we contradict ourselves if we make the concept of the *ens realissimum* such that it cannot be thought 'solely with reference to its possibility'.

Pinkerton wrongly supposed that the point that Kant makes in the second half of paragraph eight is that an assumption of the ontological argument is that it is possible that a thing which instantiates the thought of the *ens realissimum* is necessary, and that this proposition cannot be assumed to be true. It is true that the point which Pinkerton supposed that Kant make in the second half of paragraph eight, while not the same as the point which in the sentences I have just quoted he says that Kant makes in

the first half of paragraph eight, is supported by this point. The point which Pinkerton says that Kant makes in the first half of paragraph eight is that the ontological argument involves making the concept of the *ens realissimum* such that it cannot be thought solely with reference to its possibility, and that one cannot do this. This I presume would entail the point which Pinkerton says Kant makes in the second half of paragraph eight — viz. that one cannot just assume that it is possible that a thing which instantiates the thought of the *ens realissimum* is necessary. However, I nevertheless think it not only strictly speaking false but highly misleading of Pinkerton to say that the point that he says that Kant makes in the first half of paragraph eight is the same as the point which he says that Kant makes in the second half of paragraph eight. I say this because the point which Pinkerton says that Kant makes in the first half of paragraph eight — viz. the point that one cannot make the concept of the *ens realissimum* such that it cannot be thought solely with reference to its possibility — also, entails a far stronger conclusion than the point which Pinkerton says that Kant makes in the second half of paragraph eight. This far stronger conclusion which it entails is that *it is impossible* that a thing which instantiates the thought of the *ens realissimum* is necessary (cf. the point which Pinkerton (wrongly) supposes that Kant makes in the second half of paragraph eight — that *one cannot assume that it is possible* that a thing which instantiates the thought of the *ens realissimum* is necessary). I presume that Pinkerton's motive for wanting to say that Kant makes the same point in the second half of paragraph eight as in the first half of paragraph eight resulted from the fact that, as I mentioned above (see pp 309-10) Kemp Smith's translation of the sentence which in his translation is the third sentence of paragraph eight ('if that be allowed.....') suggests that paragraph eight contains only one objection to the ontological argument. As I have mentioned it in fact contains two objections.

I presume that Pinkerton would say that the argument which he ascribes to Kant in support of the point which he says that Kant makes in the first half of paragraph eight — viz. the point that one cannot make the concept of the *ens realissimum* such that it cannot

be thought solely in reference to its possibility — is an *ad hominem* argument. I say this because the argument has a premiss which Kant doesn't accept but which a propounder of the ontological argument does accept.

Here is the argument which Pinkerton ascribes to Kant :

On the assumption that our ground for accepting the possibility of the *ens realissimum* is that we take absence of contradiction in the proposition that the *ens realissimum* exists as leaving us 'a free choice of admitting such a proposition, and a purely optional admission of it into the understanding' (cf B101), we contradict ourselves if we make the concept of the *ens realissimum* such that it *cannot* be thought 'solely in reference to its possibility'⁸

It can be seen that the argument goes as follows :

- 1 (1) The *ens realissimum* is possible. A
- 2 (2) For a thing to be possible is for us to be left with a free choice of admitting the proposition that the thing exists, and a purely optional admission of the proposition to the understanding. A
- 1,2 (3) We are left with a free choice of admitting the proposition that the *ens realissimum* exists, and a purely optional admission of the proposition to the understanding. 1, 2.
- 4 (4) If we make the concept of the *ens realissimum* such that it cannot be thought solely with reference to its possibility, we are not left with a free choice of admitting the proposition that the *ens realissimum* exists and a purely optional admission of the proposition to the understanding. A
- 1,2,4 (5) We cannot make the concept of the *ens realissimum* such that it cannot be thought solely with reference to its possibility. 3, 4 MTT

(1) is the premiss which Pinkerton would say that Kant would not accept but which the propounder of the argument would accept.

(2) is obviously false. It simply does not give a correct lexical definition of 'possible'. 'Possible' is usually used in a sense such that a thing's being possible is not merely compatible with but

entailed by its being known to be actual or even necessary. If 'possible' were to be used in the idiosyncratic sense given by (2), then a person would only believe (1) for as long as he wasn't convinced of the existence of the *ens realissimum*. Thus the fact that in the course of an argument for the existence of the *ens realissimum* a person should come to believe something which contradicts (1) would be no objection to the argument.

That 'possible' should be used in a sense such that a thing's being possible is entailed by its being actual or necessary is quite consistent with taking absence of contradiction in a proposition asserting the thing to exist as one's criterion for the thing's being possible, since propositions which assert the existence of things which are in fact actual are of course free from contradiction.

Pinkerton's account of the argument in the first sentence of paragraph eight is inaccurate. What in my paraphrase of Pinkerton's paraphrase of the objection is premiss (2) — viz. the proposition that for a thing to be possible is for us to be left with a free choice as to whether we will believe that the thing exists — is not a premiss of the argument. *Contra* Pinkerton, Kant does not say that bringing into the concept of a thing the concept of its existence is incompatible with the thing's being possible. What Kant says is that bringing into the concept of a thing the concept of its existence is incompatible with *merely* supposing the thing to be possible.

I have now completed my discussion of paragraph eight and Pinkerton's interpretation of it. I have mentioned that paragraph eight contains two objections. The first (which is stated in the first sentence) is that there is a contradiction involved in introducing into the concept of a thing which one merely wished to suppose to be possible the concept of its existence. The second (which fills up the rest of the paragraph) is that the conclusion of the ontological argument is merely 'The most real being has an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible', (which Kant says is a miserable tautology). I mentioned above (pp 317-8) that this objection is based on a very whimsical application of the principle of charity, and that Kant should have expressed the point he is trying to make in paragraph eight minus the first sentence thus : 'If the ontological

argument were sound then its conclusion "The most real being exists" would be an analytic judgment in the sense "judgment the truth of which is discoverable by means of an act of analysis", and for this to be the case it would have to be the case that 'the most real being is identical with the thought of him (which of course he isn't)'.

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NOTES

1. Kant *Critique of Pure Reason* A597 = B625 Kemp Smith translates the words which I translate as 'which you merely wished to suppose to be possible' as 'which we profess to be thinking solely in reference to its possibility'. Cf. the literal translation of this sentence which I give below.
2. 'Kant's Refutation of the Ontological Argument'. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* V (1977).
3. *Kant's Dialectic*. Cambridge University Press, 1974, p. 234.
4. 'Macht es nicht aus'. Kemp Smith's translation of these words ('is of no avail in meeting this objection') is strained and does not seem to fit the context.
5. *Op. cit.* pp. 312-313.
6. *Op. cit.* p. 313.
7. *Op. cit.*, p. 313.
8. I quoted this above, p. 328.