

is in the mind, and that our conception implies the actual existence of the Being conceived, I adopt, as involving every thing essential on the subject to which it relates; only claiming to be allowed, *in the first place*, to dismiss the notion of its being an argument, in the strict sense of that term, and *secondly*, to interpret and develop it in my own manner. Its weakness as an argument is sufficiently apparent. For, granting that the conception of the Perfect Being is in the mind, what are the logical forms by which we pass to the conclusion that a Being corresponding to the conception exists? A necessary connection between what we think, and what really is, though it may subsist, assuredly cannot be proved. I believe that such connection does in every case subsist; but I believe also, that, in the case before us, we are assured of this only in actually knowing God; so that it is incompetent to use the fact of the connection as the Premiss of an argument intended to remove doubts regarding the existence of God.

Last any student hearing me should fancy that the circumstance of our having found Logic to be quite unfitted (its last arrow being now spent) to establish the being of God, brings the doctrine of the Divine existence under suspicion; and as silly persons are sometimes met with, who insist upon having proof for every thing, and who contend that you are not entitled to affirm as certain what you admit yourself unable to prove; I think it proper to remark that *no real fact admits of being proved*; so that the insufficiency which has been discovered to be inherent in the arguments we have had under discussion, is no more than might have been predicted beforehand. I distinguish between real facts, and abstract truths like those of geometry. The propositions of geometry can be demonstrated; that is, the conclusions which Euclid crowns with his triumphant symbols Q. E. D. can be shown to be absolutely certain, supposing the definitions, postulates, and axioms to be accepted. But when you pass to specific matters of fact, logical demonstration, from the nature of the case, fails; for Logic, as the science of the laws of the forms of thought, merely serves to shew that such or such notions are in harmony with, or contradiction to, given notions. The profoundest thinkers, therefore, have been unable to prove the existence of a Divine Creator, just because that truth lies beyond the range of logical proof.

In what sense then (it will be said) do I attach value to the Cartesian argument? Before answering this, I must ask you to consider what philosophy is competent, in a question of real existence, to do. Take, for instance, the question of my own existence. I cannot prove that I exist; but I can philosophically assert the fact as one immediately known, and I can point out in what circumstances the knowledge is realized. So in the case before us. God can be immediately known by his intelligent creatures—(such at least is the opinion which I humbly and reverently entertain)—and an exposition can be given of the circumstances and manner in which the knowledge is realized. And (to answer now the question which was put) I value the Cartesian argument as furnishing in substance the exposition required. As an argument to prove a fact conceived to lie beyond the range of our immediate knowledge, it is worthless; but let its propositions, instead of being considered steps in a logical process, be viewed as expositions of the manner and circumstances in which God is known by the mind, and I am mistaken if it be not found to contain the solution of our problem. DesCartes may not have put his case exactly in the form which I think the best; in particular, I demur to the horrid Procrustean syllogistic arrangements into which he has tortured his thoughts; but when I attend to the thoughts themselves, he seems to me like a musician touching the very keys of the truth.

I assume that we have the conception of the Perfect Being in the mind—to be more precise, that we have the conception of a self-existent holy God, the Creator of the universe. And, if you please, observe here that I have passed beyond the fact of the existence of an intelligent Creator, and have again brought into view what was referred to in the opening part of the lecture, but