

1: How does Descartes define God in his Ontological argument? [3 Marks]

AO1 = 3

Marks	Levels of response mark scheme
3	A full and correct answer, given precisely, with little or no redundancy.
2	The substantive content of the answer is correct, but there may be some redundancy or minor imprecision.
1	Relevant, but fragmented, points.
0	Nothing written worthy of credit.

Indicative content:

Indicative content for 3 marks

- A supremely perfect being
- The most perfect possible being
- The sum of all perfections / perfect qualities
- A being with all the perfections / perfect qualities

Indicative content for 2 marks

- A perfect being (ie no reference to 'supreme' or 'all perfections')

Indicative content for 1 mark

- Perfect
- A supreme being
- A being with perfections (like omnipotence)
- Greatest conceivable being (ie Anselm's definition)

NB: Because the 'ontological argument' is actually named in this question, and because this 'proof' is held in close connection with how Descartes understands/defines God, if students go on to say that Descartes derives God's existence from this perfection, then we will not treat it as significant redundancy.

2: Outline St. Anselm's Ontological argument [5 Marks]

AO1 = 5

Marks	Levels of response mark scheme
5	A full, clear and precise explanation. The student makes logical links between precisely identified points, with no redundancy.
4	A clear explanation, with logical links, but some imprecision/redundancy.
3	The substantive content of the explanation is present and there is an attempt at logical linking. But the explanation is not full and/or precise.
2	One or two relevant points made, but not precisely. The logic is unclear.
1	Fragmented points, with no logical structure.
0	Nothing written worthy of credit.

Indicative content:

- It is worth beginning by recognising that there is dispute over what the exact logical form of Anselm's argument is. We will present one version below.
- Anselm argues that "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" (hereafter, the Greatest Conceivable Being (GCB)) must exist.
- We have focused on his first presentation of the argument (to which Gaunilo responds) rather than his formulation in *Proslogium* 3.
- Anselm's ontological argument in Chapter 2 of the *Proslogium*:
 - P1: The concept of a being than which none greater can be conceived (ie, the greatest conceivable being/the GCB/God) exists as a (coherent) concept in the mind (in the 'understanding').
 - P2: Suppose, for *reductio*, that the GCB exists only in the mind and not in reality.
 - P3: A being that exists in the mind and in reality is greater than a being that exists only in the mind.
 - C1: Therefore, there is something greater than the GCB (a contradiction derived from P2).
 - C2: Therefore (denial of P2), the GCB must exist in the mind and in reality.
 - C3: Therefore, the GCB exists.
 -
- In Chapter 3 of the *Proslogium* he continues the argument (students are not expected to include this extra piece of argumentation, though some may):
 - P1: The concept of a being than which none greater can be conceived (ie, the greatest conceivable being/the GCB/God) exists as a (coherent) concept in the mind (in the 'understanding').
 - P2: Suppose, for *reductio*, that the GCB can be conceived of as not existing.
 - P3: A being that cannot be conceived of as not existing is greater than a being that can be conceived of as not existing.
 - C1: Therefore, there is something greater than the GCB (a contradiction derived from P2).
 - C2: Therefore (denial of P2), the GCB must exist necessarily.
- Both arguments from Anselm can be seen being "reductio ad absurdum" arguments – ie they show that the assumption that the GCB only exists in the mind leads to a contradiction and should therefore be rejected.
- Students may mention that this argument is deductive (ie, intended to be valid) and a priori (all of the premises are a priori and so can be justified independently of experience).

3: Explain Kant's objection to the Ontological argument that existence is not a predicate. [5 marks]

AO1 = 5

Marks	Levels of response mark scheme
5	A full, clear and precise explanation. The student makes logical links between precisely identified points, with no redundancy.
4	A clear explanation, with logical links, but some imprecision/redundancy.
3	The substantive content of the explanation is present and there is an attempt at logical linking. But the explanation is not full and/or precise.
2	One or two relevant points made, but not precisely. The logic is unclear.
1	Fragmented points, with no logical structure.
0	Nothing written worthy of credit.

Indicative content:

- Kant's (most famous) objection centres on the claim that 'existence is not a (real/substantive) predicate', and it is likely that students will base their response on this.
 - Some students may point out that Kant's objection is a development of Hume's objection that nothing can be shown to exist by a priori reasoning. Kant argues that Descartes' argument misunderstands what existence is, or what it is to say that something exists.
 - Kant questions the third premise in Descartes' argument: 'Existence is a perfection'. To make such a claim is to treat 'exists' like other predicates (or 'perfections') such as 'wise', 'powerful' or 'blue'. However, 'exists' does not work in this way. Saying something 'exists' does not give you more information about that thing, as saying it is 'wise' or 'blue' does. Students may give Kant's example of 100 thalers (gold coins), or another equivalent example, to illustrate this point.
 - Rather than adding to a concept's description, 'existence' 'substantiates' a concept, ie it says that there is a thing in the physical world that corresponds to the concept. Therefore, any claim of the form 'X exists' will require experience to determine whether it is true.
 - In using 'existence' as a predicate, Descartes is trying to argue that 'God exists' is an analytic proposition. A 'normal' analytic proposition, such as 'a brother is a male sibling' unpacks the concept 'brother', adding to the description of 'brother'. As 'existence' does not add to the description of a concept, it follows that any statement of the form 'X exists' cannot be an analytic statement. Rather, it must always be a synthetic statement.
 - Some students may refer to another point that Kant makes against Descartes' ontological argument: that even if existence were a predicate - and 'God exists' was an analytic truth - this would tell us nothing about the actual existence of God.

4: Outline Malcolm's Ontological argument and how an empiricist could object to a priori arguments for existence [12 marks]

AO1= 12

Marks	Levels of response mark scheme
10–12	The answer is set out in a precise, fully-integrated and logical form. The content is correct and demonstrates detailed understanding. Points are made clearly and precisely. Relevance is sustained, with very little or no redundancy. Philosophical language is used precisely throughout.
7–9	The answer is set out in a clear, integrated and logical form. The content of the answer is correct and demonstrates detailed understanding. The content is clearly relevant and points are made clearly and precisely. Any lack of clarity with respect to particular points is not sufficient to detract from the answer. Relevance is largely sustained. There may be some redundancy, though not sufficient to detract from the answer. Philosophical language is used correctly throughout.
4–6	The answer is clear and set out in a coherent form, with logical/causal links identified. The content of the answer is largely correct and most points are made clearly. Relevance is not always sustained and there is some redundancy. Philosophical language is used correctly, with any minor errors not detracting from the response.
1–3	There are some relevant points made, but no integration. Some points are clear, but there is a lack of precision – with possibly insufficient material that is relevant or too much that is irrelevant. Philosophical language is used, though not always consistently or appropriately.
0	Nothing written worthy of credit.

Indicative content

Outline Malcolm's Ontological argument

Malcolm's argument aims to show that *necessary existence* is part of the concept of God. 'God is the greatest possible being' is a logically necessary truth – it is part of our concept of God. Malcolm rules out the views that God's existence is contingent or impossible, and concludes the only possible conclusion is that God necessarily exists.

- P1. Either God exists or God does not exist.
- P2. God cannot come into existence or go out of existence.
- P3. If God exists, God cannot cease to exist.
- C1. Therefore, if God exists, God's existence is necessary.
- P4. If God does not exist, God cannot come into existence.
- C2. Therefore, if God does not exist, God's existence is impossible.
- C3. Therefore, God's existence is either necessary or impossible.

Malcolm now adds two further premises to complete the ontological argument:

- P5. God's existence is impossible only if the concept of God is self-contradictory.
- P6. The concept of God is not self-contradictory.
- C4. Therefore, God's existence is not impossible.
- C5. Therefore (from (C3) + (C4)), God exists necessarily.

and how an empiricist could object to a priori arguments for existence.

- Hume argues that the notion of necessary existence has 'no meaning' because 'it will always be possible of us at any time to conceive the non-existence of something we formerly conceived to exist'.
- He says something is only demonstrable if stating the opposite involves a logical contradiction. Hume, however says this is not the case with God's existence – there is no

contradiction in saying God does not exist. This makes God's existence contingent rather than necessary:

- "Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no Being whose existence is demonstrable."
- Students could also use Hume's Fork or his copy principle to explain that either:
 - God's existence is not a relation of ideas (as existence is not necessary) or a matter of fact (as God is not a possible object of experience).
 - All ideas are copies of impressions and we do not have an impression of God
- They may also bring in Ayer's verification principle and explain that:
 - "God exists" is not a tautology (so not verifiable *a priori*)
 - "God exists" is not verifiable empirically.
 - So the statement "God exists" is not verifiable and therefore without meaning.

5: Is the concept of God coherent? [25 marks]

AO1 = 5, AO2 = 20

Marks	Levels of response mark scheme
21–25	<p>The student argues with clear intent throughout and the logic of the argument is sustained.</p> <p>The student demonstrates detailed and precise understanding throughout.</p> <p>The conclusion is clear, with the arguments in support of it stated precisely, integrated coherently and robustly defended.</p> <p>Arguments and counter-arguments are stated in their strongest forms. Reasoned judgements are made, on an ongoing basis and overall, about the weight to be given to each argument. Crucial arguments are clearly identified against less crucial ones.</p> <p>Philosophical language is used precisely throughout.</p>
16–20	<p>The student argues with clear intent throughout and the logic of the argument is largely sustained.</p> <p>The content is correct and detailed – though not always consistently.</p> <p>The conclusion is clear, with a range of appropriate arguments supporting it.</p> <p>Arguments are generally stated in their strongest forms. There is a balancing of arguments, with weight being given to each – so crucial arguments are noted against less crucial ones. Arguments and counter-arguments are stated clearly, integrated coherently and defended.</p> <p>There may be trivial mistakes, as long as they do not detract from the argument.</p> <p>Philosophical language is used correctly throughout.</p>
11–15	<p>A clear response to the question, in the form of an argument, demonstrating intent.</p> <p>The content is detailed and correct and most of it is integrated.</p> <p>A conclusion and reasons are given and those reasons clearly support the conclusion. There might be a lack of clarity/precision about the logic of the argument as a whole.</p> <p>Arguments and counter-arguments are given, but there may be a lack of balance. Not all arguments are stated in their strongest forms. Stronger and weaker arguments are noted and there are attempts to identify the weight to be given to different arguments, but not necessarily those which are crucial to the conclusion.</p> <p>Philosophical language is used correctly, with any minor errors not detracting from the argument.</p>
6–10	<p>The response to the question is given in the form of an argument, but not fully coherently.</p> <p>The content is largely correct, though there are some gaps and a lack of detail. Relevant points are recognised/identified, but not integrated.</p> <p>Alternative positions are identified, but not precisely. Counter-arguments might be stated in weak forms or even slightly misrepresented. Arguments and counter-arguments are juxtaposed, so similarities and contrasts identified, rather than their impact being clear.</p> <p>Philosophical language is used throughout, though not always fully correctly and/or consistently.</p>
1–5	<p>There is little evidence of an argument.</p> <p>There may be missing content, substantial gaps in the content or the content may be one-sided.</p> <p>There may be a conclusion and several reasonable points may be made. There may be some connections between the points, but there is no clear relationship between the points and the conclusion.</p> <p>There is some basic use of philosophical language.</p>
0	<p>Nothing written worthy of credit.</p>

Indicative content:

- Students may well explain what is meant by the concept 'God':
 - A being with a large proportion of the following characteristics (there is obviously dispute over the characteristics): omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent/morally perfect, eternal or everlasting.
 - Or more generally, as a supremely perfect being (Descartes); the greatest conceivable being (Anselm); an unlimited being (Malcolm).
- Conclusions may (and are likely) to be drawn by arguing for and against some of the following positions, drawing from the supporting content bullet-pointed underneath (though this list is not exhaustive):
 - **YES:** The concept of God is coherent (as it stands)
 - **YES:** The concept of God is coherent (so long as it is understood in a particular way).
 - **NO:** The concept of God is not coherent

NO: The concept of God is incoherent.

- **Omnipotence:**
 - **The paradox of the stone:** an omnipotent being is impossible
 - **Various other "paradoxes of omnipotence"**
 - God cannot change the truth-value of necessary truths of maths/logic/geometry etc.
 - God cannot change the past.
 - God cannot sin/commit evil acts (given that God is supremely good).
 - God cannot control free human beings (assuming that a supremely good God would create humans with free will).
 - Responses to such issues might involve claiming that there is no issue so long as we have a particular understanding of 'omnipotence', eg:
 - the ability to do the logically possible.
 - the ability to do the logically possible tasks which do not undermine his perfection.
 - the ability to do the logically possible tasks which do not conflict with other attributes (eg that do not undermine his omnibenevolence).
- **Supreme goodness/omnibenevolence:**
 - **The Euthyphro dilemma:** there is no coherent/satisfactory way of understanding God's relationship to morality/moral truths. This could be developed as an attack on God's perfect goodness or an attack on God's omnipotence (or, indeed, both).
 - Responses to such issues might involve denying that there is a real dilemma here, or objecting that the dilemma assumes (erroneously) a distinction between the divine nature and the divine will (eg Aquinas and philosophers in the Thomist tradition):
 - Things are good because God wills them, but it is first and foremost God who is (metaphysically) good (parallels could be drawn with Plato's Form of the Good); and unlike human beings there is no division in God (eg between passion and rational will), and so God's will perfectly reflect the divine nature (which is good), so there is no possibility of arbitrary or wicked commands. (Some students may argue that this response undermines God's omnipotence).
 - God wills things because they are good, and the independent standard of goodness (natural or non-natural) can be known without any reference to (or knowledge of) God. But that does not make moral goodness distinct from God, since God created the world including the foundation of moral goodness.
- **The incompatibility of God's omniscience and human freewill**—and therefore the incoherence of God's omniscience and his supreme goodness assuming that a supremely good God would create humans with free will.
- **Various other issues with God's omniscience:**

- God cannot know particular temporal truths, eg what time it is (if God is considered to be eternal).
 - God cannot know phenomenal truths (truths about qualia), eg what it is like to experience redness.
 - God cannot both be immutable and omniscient (eg Kretzmann): no being can both know what time it is as time goes on, and be immutable.
 - Responses to such issues might involve arguing:
 - These arguments often presuppose a temporal perspective on actions and events, but God is eternal, and all actions and events are eternally present to God.
 - Qualia do not exist, and so there is no deficit in divine knowledge.
 - A God who is omnipresent and omniscient could know phenomenal truths (if arguing from a Christian perspective, students could invoke the Incarnation).
 - The attribute of 'omniscience' just means that God can 'know everything that it is possible to know', which excludes things like future contingents.
- **Multiple attributes:**
 - **The logical problem of evil:**
 - It is incoherent to claim that a supremely good, omnipotent and omniscient being exists assuming that evil exists.
 - The concept of a supremely good, omnipotent and omniscient being that created a world containing (the risk/possibility of)evil is incoherent.
 - Responses to such issues might involve denying there is any incoherence here:
 - The free will defence (eg Plantinga and 'transworld depravity', Augustine).
 - 'Soul making' theodicy (eg Hick).
 - 'Best of all possible worlds' theodicy (ie Leibniz).