

Ontological Argument

<u>Sub-topics</u> Ontological Argument • <i>A priori</i> compared to <i>a posteriori</i> types of arguments, deductive reasoning, not evidence based but understanding of concept 'God' as an analytic proposition. • Definitions of 'God', necessary existence, aseity. • Strengths and weaknesses of the Ontological Arguments: concept of proof compared to probability, debates about 'existence' and predicates. Challenges to the argument. • Philosophical language and thought through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers, illustrated in issues in the philosophy of religion. • With reference to the ideas of Anselm and B Russell.	<u>Key words</u> <u>Deductive reasoning:</u> In deductive arguments, the premises offer logical support for the conclusion: if the premises are true, the conclusion is necessarily true. A priori: without or priori to evidence or experience Logical: the premises of an argument leads to the conclusion Illogical: the premises of the argument are unsound or the premises of the argument do not fit the conclusion Mind: Ideas can exist in the mind. Be thought of. Reality: Having an external objective form. Exist outside the mind. Reductio ad absurdum: An argument that shows a statement to be false or absurd of its logical conclusions were to be accepted Proslogion: A work written by St Anselm, used as a meditation, but including within it the classical form of the ontological argument A being 'that than which none greater can be conceived': St Anselm's key definition of God Necessary: A being that must exist. It cannot not exist. It does not rely on anything else for it to exist. Contingent: A being that depends on something else of its existence. A being with a beginning and an end.	<u>Key scholars</u> St Anselm Rene Descartes Gaunilo Immanuel Kant
<u>Possible H/WK/Questions</u> 8 mark Explore significant elements of the Ontological Argument. Explore ideas about deductive reasoning in the ontological argument for the existence of God. Explore the key challenges to the ontological argument for the existence of God. Explore the key ideas of St Anselm in relation to the design argument for the existence of God. Explore the key ideas of Descartes in relation to the design argument for the existence of God. 12 mark Assess the weaknesses of the ontological argument for the existence of God. Assess the claim that it is impossible to prove the existence of God by a priori reasoning alone. 30 mark Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the ontological argument for the existence of God. Evaluate whether a priori or a posteriori arguments are more convincing for the existence of God.	<u>Starting point- Important key facts</u> - The ontological argument is an a prior argument for the existence of God that uses deductive reasoning - It was first proposed by St Anselm in his work, Proslogion who begins his work with the famous phrase, 'Faith Seeking Understanding' (<i>Fides Quaerens Intellectum</i> in Latin) - Anselm's arguments is in two parts or forms. Some key quotes from St Anselm include the following: '...there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.' - The first part of St Anselm's argument explores the nature of existence. A being has a greater existence if it exists both in the mind and in reality and it is clear that the idea of God exists in the mind - The second part of St Anselm's argument explore God's uniquely necessary existence. God is define in such a way that it is impossible to conceive of God's not existing. This is because God must have the greatest form of existence (necessary) existence due to the definition of God as 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'. - St Anselm was challenged by Gaunilo who sets up a supposedly parallel logical argument to for the existence of the most perfect island - However, St Anselm responded to state that his argument only applies to necessary (and not contingent) beings - Descartes also supported the ontological argument and developed his own version. He argued that existence was a necessary characteristic or predicate of a 'supremely perfect being' and uses the examples of a triangle (that must have three sides) and mountain (which must have a valley). Just as these are essential characteristics of a triangle and mountain, Descartes argues that existence is a necessary attribute of a supremely perfect being - Immanuel Kant challenged Descartes' version of the ontological argument by arguing that 'existence is not a predicate' - There is also debate about St Anselm's intentions. Is Proslogion a meditation on faith and the attributes of God? Or is it intended a direct 'proof' of the existence of God?	
<u>Stretch and challenge/Suggested further reading</u> Richard Swinburne, 'Is there a God'? Chapters 2 and 4. John Hick, 'Philosophy of Religion'. Chapter 2 Brian Davies, 'An introduction to the philosophy of religion'. Chapter 4. https://philosophydungeon.weebly.com/design-argument.html https://iep.utm.edu/hume-rel/		

