

Developments of the ontological argument – Descartes and Malcom



By the end of today's lesson you will have:

- Re-capped your knowledge of Anselm's ontological argument
 - Learnt Descartes and Malcom's arguments
 - Compared the three ontological arguments – their similarities and differences

Spec Check – Component 2: Philosophy

Theme 1: Arguments for the existence of God

AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding		AO2 – Issues for Analysis and Evaluation
A	Inductive arguments – Cosmological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether inductive arguments for the existence of God are persuasive. • The extent to which the Kalam cosmological argument is convincing. • The effectiveness of the cosmological/teleological argument for God’s existence. • Whether cosmological/teleological arguments are persuasive in the 21st Century. • The effectiveness of the challenges to the cosmological/teleological arguments for God’s existence. • Whether scientific explanations are more persuasive than philosophical explanations for the universe’s existence.
B	Inductive arguments – Teleological	
C	Challenges to inductive arguments	
D	Deductive arguments – Origins of the ontological argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which ‘a priori’ arguments for God’s existence are persuasive. • The extent to which different religious views on the nature of God impact on arguments for the existence of God. • The effectiveness of the ontological argument for God’s existence. • Whether the ontological argument is more persuasive than the cosmological/teleological arguments for God’s existence. • The effectiveness of the challenges to the ontological argument for God’s existence. • The extent to which objections to the ontological argument are persuasive.
E	Deductive arguments – Developments of the ontological argument	
F	Challenges to the ontological argument	

Rene Descartes

- 17th Century scholar
- Developed Anselm's ontological argument
- Stated that God is a being who possesses all perfections
- God has attributes magnified (ALL loving) (ALL powerful)
- God is supremely perfect and possesses every positive attribute

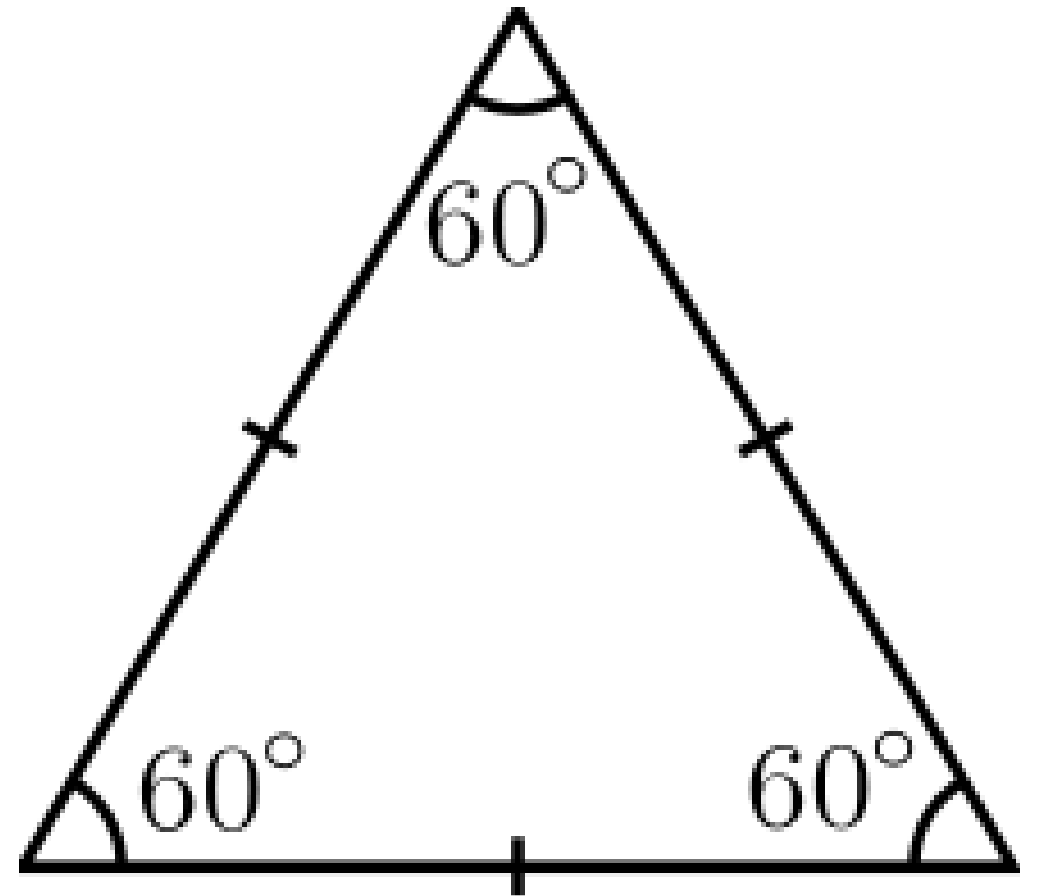


Descartes' Analogies

- **Individually** read either the triangle analogy or the mountain and valley analogy
- Draw a picture which explains your analogy
- Explain it to your partner

Rene Descartes

- **Triangle analogy:**
- In order to THINK about the triangle, there needs to be a set of criteria that can be understood
- This makes up the definition of a triangle
- Similarly, to think of God you MUST think of the attributes that he has
- God has necessary perfection
- The IDEA of God and his ATTRIBUTES are inextricably linked – the essence and the existence are linked
- This develops Anselm's ontological argument by teaching us about God's qualities, rather than just saying 'nothing greater than which can be conceived'



Rene Descartes

- **Mountain and valley analogy:**
- Think of a set of mountains.
- It is impossible to not also think of the valley
- It is similarly impossible to think of God without thinking of his existence
- The necessity of God's existence is found in the idea of God



AO1 - Essay Planning

- Continue from the AO1 paragraphs started in previous lessons:
- 'Explain the ontological argument for the existence of God' (20)
- **POINT:** Rene Descartes developed Anselm's ontological argument in the 17th Century to demonstrate how the deductive argument can also reveal attributes and characteristics of God and prove that God's existence is a predicate
- **EXPLAIN:** Descartes suggested that a perfect God **MUST** exist, because when we think of God he is inextricably linked to the attributes of perfection (i.e. all loving, all powerful etc). Existence must be a predicate of perfection.
- **EXAMPLE:** He uses the analogy of the triangle to show that if one is to think of a triangle they must know the attributes it possess (i.e. 3 sided shape adding up to 180 degrees). Similarly, to think of God you **MUST** think of his perfection
- **LINK:** Therefore, Descartes proves that God exists through a priori knowledge and that this is a perfect God

Immanuel Kant – A response to Descartes

- 18th Century Prussian philosopher
- Rejected Anselm's and Descartes' ontological argument
- Stated that existence is not a determining predicate: it cannot be a property that an object can either possess or lack
- Objected that in saying 'God exists' this can teach us anything about the characteristics of God
- Therefore we can't state a priori that a perfect God exists
- Ontological argument with Kant critique – Play from 6.15
- Kant's criticism of ontological argument

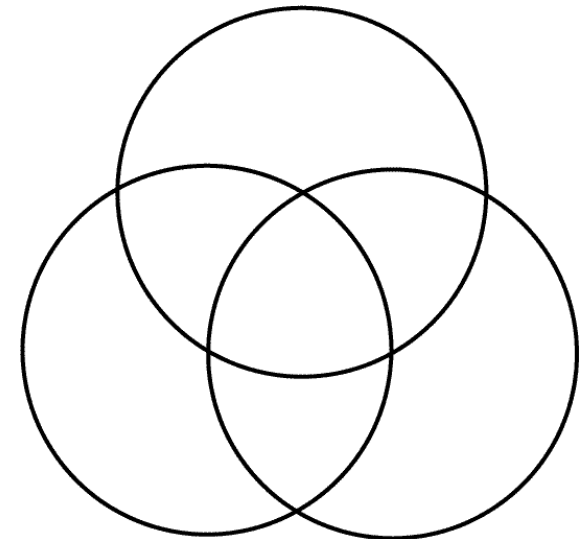


Norman Malcom

- 20th Century scholar
- **Disagreed with parts of Anselm's and Descartes'** ontological arguments
- Acknowledged that Anselm saw existence as a predicate in Proslogion 2 (i.e, something that was assumed) but agreed with Anselm's *proslogion 3* – that **God has necessary existence**
- **Questioned how we refer to the idea of 'existence' of God**, because if something 'exists' it suggests that it has a beginning
- God can't have a beginning because he is infinite.
- Malcom therefore states that the ontological argument should regard **God as an UNLIMITED being** who is necessary, rather than an existing being
- Suggested that God **can't 'come in and out of existence'** because he is necessary
- His existence is either necessary or impossible
- For Malcom; God is the **unlimited being and possess all perfections**

Norman Malcom

- [VIDEO](#)
- **TASK:**
- Read page 42 and 43 as a pair
- Create a VENN diagram which compares the similarities and differences between Anselm / Descartes / Malcom



Knowledge Re-Cap

- **Speak it out:**
- Proslogion 2
- Gaunilo
- Proslogion 3
- Descartes Triangle
- Descartes Mountains and Valleys
- Kant's Thalers
- Malcom – unlimited being



AO1 - Essay Planning

- Continue from the AO1 paragraphs started in previous lessons:
- ‘Explain the ontological argument for the existence of God’ (20)
- **POINT:** Norman Malcom further developed the ontological argument...
- **EXPLAIN:**
- **EXAMPLE:**
- **LINK:**