

**Anselm (1033–1109)**

**Anselm's First Ontological Argument**

*Fools say in their hearts, 'there is no god'.*

Psalm 14:1

Something that exists in reality and in the mind must be greater than something that exists as an idea in the mind alone. Therefore, God must exist in reality and in the mind. Existence is a predicate of God.

**Anselm's Second Ontological Argument**

God's existence is necessary. By God Christians mean the greatest possible being.

**Gaunilo (eleventh century)**

Necessary existence is 'unintelligible' and you cannot define the idea into existence. Gaunilo argued that while you can conceive of the most perfect island, that does not mean that it exists. He applies the same reasoning to Anselm's Ontological Argument.

**Anselm's response to Gaunilo**

Anselm says that if you conceive of the greatest possible being you conceive of a being that cannot be even conceived not to exist. Plantinga (1932–) suggested that a further response to Gaunilo would be that however great an island is, there could always be one better. He continued that God is maximally great in Anselm's thought, so the greatest possible being and the greatest possible island are not comparable.

**Aquinas (1225–74)**

Aquinas argued against Anselm, saying that God's existence is not self-evident, and human beings are not in a position to understand God's nature.

**Descartes (1596–1650)**

Descartes wrote that every person has the idea of God in them. Some things, such as mathematics or God's existence, cannot be doubted. To show God's existence is to show that there is no reason to ever doubt that God exists. Both God and triangles have an 'immutable' essence and part of God's essence is existence. God is the supremely perfect being.

# The Ontological Argument

Key concepts and facts on the Ontological Argument for the existence of God

AQA: 7062A–E  
OCR: H573/01  
Philosophy of Religion  
Edexcel: 9RS0/01  
Philosophy of Religion  
WJEC/Eduqas:  
A120PA–F

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**Gassendi (1592–1655)**

Gassendi responded to Descartes, saying that it is only relevant to discuss the perfection of something if it exists.

**Descartes' response to Gassendi**

Descartes' response to this was that existence is necessarily part of the nature or essence of God, and the relation between existence and essence is quite different in the case of God from what it is in the case of a triangle.

**Kant (1724–1804)**

Kant argued that existence is not a 'predicate'. All philosophical statements or propositions about existence are synthetic and they need to be verified as true or false. God's existence, like any other thing, is synthetic and needs to be verified.

**Hartshorne (1897–2000)**

Hartshorne responds to Kant by saying that there is a big difference between an idea of God and God existing in reality as well.

**Malcolm (1911–90)**

Malcolm responds to Kant by saying that necessary existence could be a predicate of God.