Metaphysics of God Exam Questions

These are the terms that are likely to be asked about in a 3 mark question.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A posteriori** | Statements or propositions that can only be shown to be true or false through experience. |
| **A priori** | Statements or propositions that can only be shown to be true or false through reason. |
| **Analogy** | A comparison between two or more things, typically undertaken to explain the nature or properties of a particular thing. |
| **Analytic** | Statements that are true or false from the meaning of the terms involved. Analytical statements are often thought to be tautological. |
| **blik** | An attitude to or view of the world that is not held or withdrawn on the basis of empirical experience. |
| **Causal Principle** | An attitude to or view of the world that is not held or withdrawn on the basis of empirical experience. |
| **Cognitive** | Language which makes claims about reality that are true or false, i.e. language which states facts. |
| **Contingency** | In the context of existence; beings which depend on something else for their existence, and can be thought not to exist. |
| **Cosmological argument** | An argument that infers the existence of God using principles of causation, contingency or finitude about the universe. |
| **Deductive reasoning** | A form of reasoning where the truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion. |
| **Eschatological** | Referring to the ‘last things’– death, the final judgment, and the ultimate destiny of human beings. |
| **Inductive reasoning** | A form of reasoning where the truth of the premises provides strong evidence of, but does not guarantee, the truth of the conclusion. |
| **Infinite regress** | A sequence (often causal) of reasoning which has no discernible end. |
| **Metaphysics** | A branch of philosophy which examines the fundamental nature of things, including the concepts that define the nature of things. |
| **Moral Evil** | Suffering that arises as the result of the actions of free agents. |
| **Natural Evil** | Suffering that arises independent of the actions of free agents / as the result of natural processes |
| **Necessity** | In the context of existence; beings which cannot be thought not to exist and were not brought into being by anything else. |
| **Non-cognitive** | Language which does *not* make claims about reality that are true or false, i.e. language which *does* *not* state facts. |
| **Ontological argument** | An argument which infers the existence of God from reason alone. |
| **Predicate** | The part of a sentence which affirms something about the subject. |
| **Property** | An attribute or characteristic of something which forms part of its identity. |
| **Reductio ad absurdum** | A form of argumentation that attempts to disprove a proposition by showing it leads to absurd or extreme unlikely conclusions. |
| **Reduction** | The process of explaining a process or event by referring to smaller, constituent components or parts. |
| **Sustaining Cause** | A cause that brings about its effect continuously, rather than at a specific moment, such that the effect depends on the continued existence and operation of the cause. |
| **Synthetic** | Statements which are true or false according to whether they correspond to states or facts about the world. |
| **Teleological argument** | An argument which infers the existence of God through observation of order, complexity and design in the universe. |
| **Temporal Cause** | A cause that brings about its effect at a time, such that the effect comes after the cause and can continue after the cause ceases. |
| **Theodicy** | An attempt to explain how or why an omnipotent, omniscient, supremely good God would allow the (apparent) presence of evil in the world. |

**The concepts and nature of ‘God’**

Explain the difference between an everlasting God and an eternal God. (5 marks)

Explain how the paradox of the stone might challenge the concept of God. (5 marks)

Explain how the Euthyphro dilemma might challenge the concept of God. (5 marks)

Explain how the existence of free human beings would present a challenge to the concept of an omniscient God. (5 marks)

Explain how the paradox of the stone might challenge the concept of God and how this might be resolved. (12 marks)

Explain how the Euthyphro dilemma might challenge the concept of God and how this might be resolved. (12 marks)

Explain how the existence of free human beings would present a challenge to the concept of an omniscient God and how this might be resolved. (12 marks)

Is the concept of God coherent? (25 marks)

**Arguments Relating to the Existence of God: Ontological Arguments**

Explain St Anselm's ontological argument. (5)

Explain Descartes' ontological argument. (5)

Explain Norman Malcolm's ontological argument. (5)

Explain Gaunilo's 'perfect island' objection to Anselm’s ontological argument. (5)

Explain Hume’s (Hume’s fork) objection to ontological arguments. (5)

Explain Kant's objection to ontological arguments based on existence not being a predicate. (12)

Explain St Anselm's ontological argument **and** Gaunilo's 'perfect island' objection. (12)

Explain Descartes' ontological argument **and** the empiricist objection from Hume’s fork. (12)

Explain St. Anselm/Descartes’ ontological argument **and** Kant’s objection based on existence not being a predicate. (12)

How convincing are ontological arguments for the existence of God? (25)

**Arguments Relating to the Existence of God: Teleological/Design Arguments**

Explain the design argument from analogy as presented by Hume. (5)

Explain William Paley’s design argument from spatial order/purpose. (5)

Explain Richard Swinburne’s design argument from temporal order/regularity. (5)

Explain Hume’s objection that teleological arguments fail because they are arguing from a unique case. (5)

Explain why evolution by natural selection causes a problem for Paley’s design argument. (5)

Explain the design argument from analogy as presented by Hume **and** his objections to the analogy. (12)

Explain William Paley’s design argument from spatial order/purpose **and** the problem caused by examples of spatial disorder. (12)

How convincing are teleological arguments for the existence of God? (25)

**Arguments Relating to the Existence of God: Cosmological Arguments**

Explain the Kalām argument. (5)

Explain Aquinas' 1st Way. (5)

Explain Aquinas’ 2nd Way. (5)

Explain Aquinas’ 3rd way. (5)

Explain Descartes' argument based on his continuing existence (an argument from causation). (5)

Explain Leibniz’s argument from the principle of sufficient reason. (5)

Explain [*a form of the cosmological argument*] **and** the objection that an infinite series is possible. (12)

Explain [*a form of the cosmological argument*] **and** Hume’s objection to the causal principle. (12)

Explain Aquinas’ 3rd way **and** Russell’s objection that it commits the fallacy of composition. (12)

Explain [*a form of the cosmological argument*] **and** the objection that a necessary being is impossible. (12)

How convincing are cosmological arguments for the existence of God. (25)

**Arguments Relating to the Existence of God: Problem of Evil**

Explain the logical problem of evil. (5)

Explain the evidential problem of evil. (5)

Explain the distinction between moral and natural evil. (5)

Explain Plantinga’s free will defence against the logical problem of evil. (5)

Explain Hick’s soul-making theodicy. (5)

Compare and contrast the logical and evidential problem of evil. (12)

Explain the logical problem of evil **and** Plantinga’s free will defence against it. (12)

Explain the evidential problem of evil **and** Hick’s soul-making theodicy. (12)

Does the problem of evil prove God does not exist? (25)

**Religious Language**

What does it mean to say that a person’s religious claim is unfalsifiable? (3)

What does Hick mean by eschatological verification? (3)

What does Hare mean by a ‘blik’. (3)

Explain the distinction between cognitivism and non-cognitivism about religious language. (5)

Explain how the verification principle can be applied to religious language. (5)

Explain how the falsification principle can be applied to religious language. (5)

Explain how the story of the gardener can be used to argue that religious language used by religious believer is meaningless. (5)

Explain Mitchell’s story of the trusting partisan in response to the claim that religious language is meaningless. (5)

Explain how the verification principle can be applied to religious language **and** the objection that the principle is self-defeating. (12)

Explain Flew and Mitchell’s disagreement about the meaningfulness of religious language. (12)

Is religious language meaningful? (25)