

How might Descartes be criticised?

1. Logical problem with Cogito. Does Descartes assume the existence of the very thing he sets out to prove?

I think

Therefore I am

This may be a “circular argument”

2. Why does Descartes not doubt the validity of reason? If he can doubt mathematical truths, then surely reason can also be doubted?

3. Is the rule of cause and effect a valid one? Can we think of an example of an imperfect cause with a perfect effect?

4. Is a perfect being a morally good being?

5. Is a morally good being a being that would never deceive us? Might deception sometimes be the most moral way to act?

6. The “Cartesian Circle” criticism.

a) Descartes can *only* trust his “clear and distinct” ideas once he has proved that God exists

b) In order to prove that God exists, Descartes claims that he has a clear idea of God.

c) He cannot, however, rely on this clear idea of God until he has proved that God exists!

d) Descartes needs to prove that God exists before he can prove that God exists! This is clearly nonsensical.