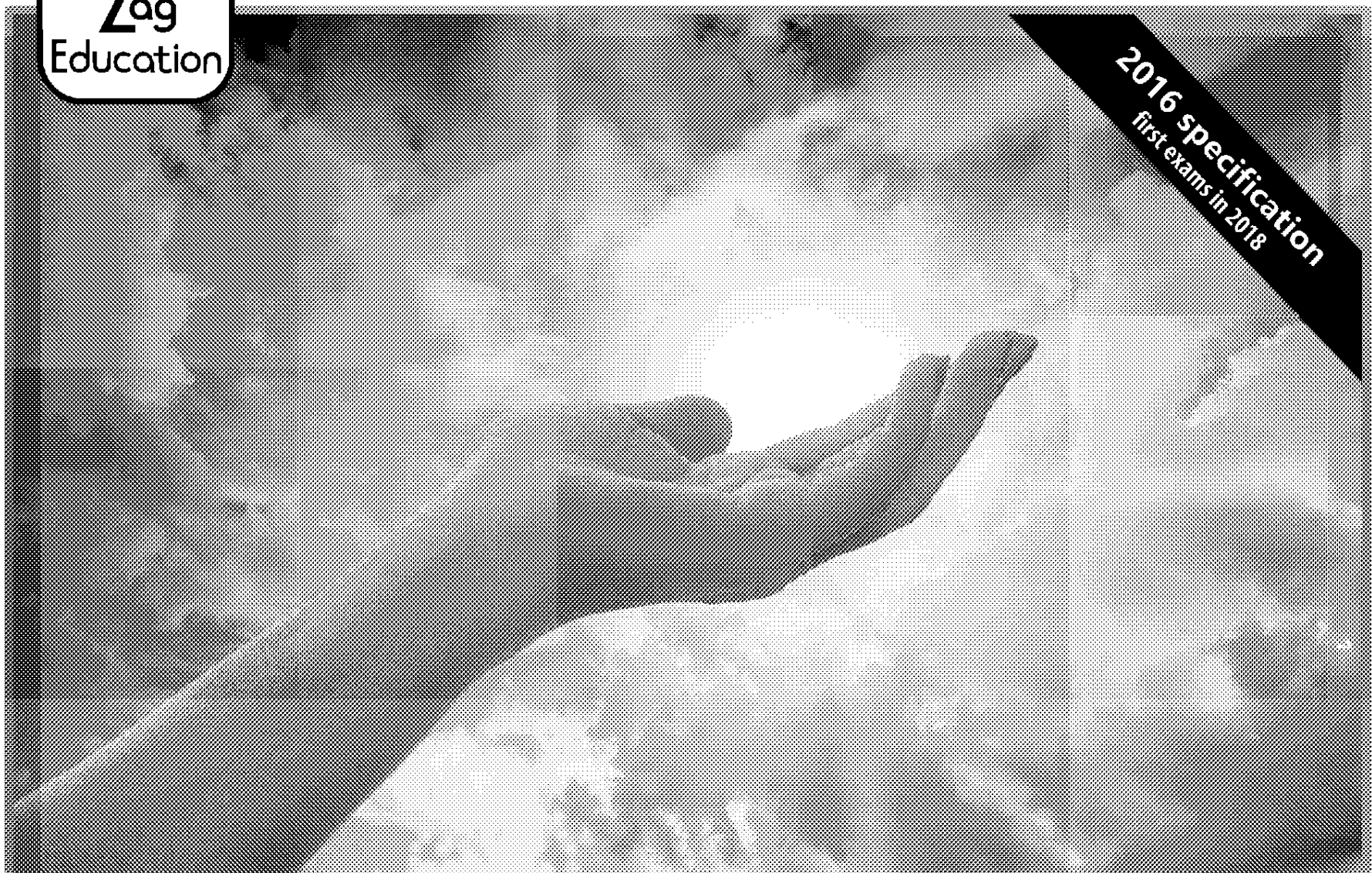




**Religious Studies**

A Level Year 2 | AQA | 7062



**2016 specification**  
first exams in 2018

# **Philosophy of Religion Course Companion**

For A Level Year 2 AQA  
Religious Studies: Component 1A

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# Teacher's Introduction

This is a resource that I have used with A Level AQA (7062) Religious Studies students in the classroom to help them to achieve the highest grades possible for Component 1, Section A: Philosophy of Religion (Year 2). The corresponding AS/A Level AQA Year 1 Course Companion for Component 1, Section A: Philosophy of Religion is available at [zzed.uk/7291-resource](https://www.zzed.uk/7291-resource).

I have found that the trick to teaching A Level is to make tricky content as straightforward and clear as possible so that students can understand it quickly. This allows students to spend more time forming opinions about different philosophical and theological ideas and discussing them together. Too many A Level resources are, in my opinion, unnecessarily wordy and complicated and overwhelm students, particularly those who are disadvantaged, hindering their progress and understanding.

I hope that you enjoy using this resource with your students and that it helps those you teach get to grips with the course content quickly so that you can spend more time discussing and evaluating these ideas with them.

*March 2020*

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

IS RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE COGNITIVE OR NOT?

Realist/Cognitive Language	Anti-realist/Non-cognitive Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Deals with factual statements which can be proven to be true or false.</li><li>Can be tested through sense experience, e.g. 'the Queen is the head of state'.</li><li>Can contain meaningful and factual content for believers, e.g. 'God exists.' or 'God loves me.'</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Myths, symbols, metaphors.</li><li>Expresses a religious attitude, e.g. 'Jesus is the lamb of God'.</li><li>Cannot be tested or proven.</li><li>Not to be taken literally.</li></ul>

The first question we need to ask when examining religious language is whether it is cognitive. If we believe that religious believers who speak about God are doing so in a literal, cognitive way, then we are saying that their statements are factual and can be proven true or false. If, when they say, 'God is good', 'God is loving', 'God is powerful', etc., they are speaking literally (in the same way as we would 'Sarah is good', 'Jack is loving,' or 'Ali is powerful'), then we are saying that their statements are cognitive. A minority of Christians are 'literalists/fundamentalists' and believe that the world of the Bible should be taken literally as a factual, historical and scientific statement.

However, the majority of Christians advocate an anti-realist or non-cognitive approach to religious language. They believe that the words of the Bible are open to interpretation and provide truths rather than literal truths. They argue that God is, by definition, unknowable – he is infinite, while we are mere human beings, while he is Perfection. It is impossible, they argue, for us, with our limited human imaginations, to explain a perfect God in a literal way. However, God is all-consuming and must, therefore, be expressed. Rudolf Otto argues that when we speak of God, we are speaking of the 'wholly other', all we can do is use the words which we have available to us – they are not a literal description of God and they may not make sense to anyone who hasn't had a religious experience in their lives, but we must make the best of what we have.

Scholars who advocate a non-cognitive approach to religious language:

<b>R M Hare (1919–2002)</b> argued that religious statements are 'blik's' – they are incapable of being empirically verified and cannot be falsified, but they are nevertheless meaningful to the believers who use them as they affect the way in which they live their lives.	<b>Paul Tillich (1886–1965)</b> advocated the idea that religious statements are symbolic. Symbols (such as good, powerful, loving, etc.) 'unlock our souls', enabling us to have a spiritual understanding of 'Being Itself'.	<b>Wittgenstein (1889–1951)</b> argued that religious language is a collection of myths and symbols which encourage people to act in a moral way. Religious language binds the religious community together as they have a common response to the symbols used.
<b>J H Randall (1899–1980)</b> argued that religious language is a collection of myths and symbols which encourage people to act in a moral way. Religious language binds the religious community together as they have a common response to the symbols used.	<b>Braithwaite (1900–1990)</b> was influenced by Wittgenstein and believed that religious statements were, first and foremost, moral statements told through stories. Whether or not the stories are true does not matter, what matters is that religious language has meaning for those who use it.	<b>Roger Scruton (1944–2020)</b> argued that religious language is a collection of myths and symbols which encourage people to act in a moral way. Religious language binds the religious community together as they have a common response to the symbols used.

**Activity:** Rank these approaches in order of success, with 1 being the approach you think is the most effective and 3 being the approach you think is the least effective.

If we are happy to accept that the things people say about God are not literal, but are instead metaphors or 'blik's', then perhaps believers can speak about God in a way that is meaningful. However, if we feel that religious statements are literal and that believers mean them literally, then religious language runs the risk of seeming meaningless if we apply falsification principles.

**Exam prep 1:** Examine non-cognitive approaches to religious language.

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The Verification Principle

**Logical positivism** developed out of the work of a group of philosophers known as the Vienna Circle. The group included Moritz Schlick and Rudolf Carnap. The logical positivists did not believe that we can gain knowledge of the external world. Instead, they were interested in the ways in which we can convey our knowledge about the world. The logical positivists strongly believed that only statements which can be empirically verified (proven to be true by evidence gained through our senses) are meaningful.

The logical positivists claimed that there are only two forms of language capable of being meaningful:

- 1. Analytic (a priori) propositions– In this case, knowledge is gained through logic. Statements which we cannot deny, as to do so would involve a contradiction. For example, the statement ‘a married bachelor’ cannot be a true proposition because the definition of a ‘bachelor’ is ‘unmarried’.
- 2. Synthetic (a posteriori) propositions– In this case, knowledge can be proven through sense experience or experiment. In other words, it can be **empirically verified**. For example, the statement ‘John is a bachelor’ could be verified by investigating whether John is unmarried.

The logical positivists thus came up with the **verification principle** – a statement is meaningful only if we can understand the conditions under which it is true or false. This means that it is possible to verify statements made about the world by using our senses or through scientific investigation. Statements which we cannot verify are meaningless. For example, we cannot verify statements made about God by using our senses or through scientific investigation. Therefore, religious statements are meaningless, as we cannot even know how to go about showing that a religious statement is true or false.

Logical positivist – A J Ayer (1920–1989)

In *Language, Truth and Logic*, Ayer argued that in order for a statement to be meaningful, it has to be verifiable in principle. We need to know how to show that a statement is verifiable in order for it to have meaning. Thus, although physicists might have to spend a long time actually demonstrating that their ideas about the universe are true, they know how to do this in principle. Therefore, for Ayer, religious statements are meaningless, as we cannot gain sense data to show that they are either true or false.

As we have seen, some believers have argued that religious language *is* meaningful. They argue that it serves a different function from ordinary language due to the fact that it concerns the infinite. They argued that viewing religious language analogously, symbolically, or metaphorically can make God meaningful. However, the logical positivists maintained that the fact that religious statements cannot possibly be proven through empirical evidence means that they are meaningless.

After facing criticism that the verification principle made many scientific and historical statements meaningless (because we cannot observe past events or observe subatomic particles, for example), logical positivists needed to modify the ideas of logical positivism. To do this, he introduced the idea of ‘weak verification’ to the verification principle.

Strong Verification	Weak Verification
There is no doubt that the statement is true as it can be verified using sense experience and observation, e.g. ‘Mary has red hair’ can be shown to be true or false by visiting Mary and checking to see what colour her hair is.	A statement can be weakly verified if it can be proven, even though it cannot be directly verified by sense experience today, e.g. ‘Columbus discovered America’ can be verified if we had been there at the time, we would have seen this through our sense experience. Also, a statement can be weakly verified if it is possible to be verified in the future even if it cannot be verified today.

*A proposition is ... verifiable in the strong sense of the term if, and only if, the truth could be conclusively established ... But it is verifiable in the weak sense if it is possible for experience to render it probable.’ (Ayer – Language, Truth and Logic)*

Under the weak verification principle, historical statements could be meaningful. Religious statements remained meaningful.

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The Falsification Principle

Anthony Flew argued that religious statements are meaningless as nothing is ever – they cannot be falsified. Religious believers, he argued, are so convinced of the statements that they refuse to accept any evidence which might show that God did anything which challenges their ideas, religious believers qualify them. For example, good despite bad things happening in the world he created. As a result of this, Flew’s language ‘dies the death of a thousand qualifications’.

Flew gives the example of the religious statement ‘God is all-loving and all-powerful’. He would accept that this statement might be false, even when faced with great evil and suffering. To ignore the evidence of suffering, Flew argued, in order to continue to believe in God. Flew asks whether there is any example of suffering and evil in the world that would show that God does not exist. He concludes that no amount of suffering would ever cause a believer to doubt God. As nothing would ever convince a theist that God does not exist, all religious statements are meaningless. To illustrate his point, Flew uses John Wisdom’s parable of the gardener.

Wisdom’s parable of the gardener

Two people return to their long-neglected garden and find, among the weeds, the surprisingly vigorous. One says to the other, ‘It must be that a gardener has been about these weeds.’ The other disagrees, and an argument ensues. They pitch to and fro. No gardener is ever seen. The believer wonders whether there is an invisible gardener, or bloodhounds, but the bloodhounds never give a cry. However, the believer remains convinced the gardener is invisible, has no scent and makes no sound. The sceptic doesn’t agree. An invisible, intangible, elusive gardener differs from an imaginary gardener, or even a nonexistent one.

Flew argues that to make statements such as ‘God exists’ believers must be open to falsification. However, they are not, making religious language unfalsifiable and, therefore, meaningless.

**Activity:** Which of these challenges is the most damaging for religious language according to the falsification principle, and why?

**Exam prep 2:** Examine how the meaningfulness of religious language has been challenged by the falsification principle.

## CHALLENGES TO THE VERIFICATION AND FALSIFICATION

### Eschatological Verification – John Hick (1922–2012)

Hick argued that religious statements will potentially be verified when we die. At the time of death, we will know whether religious statements were true or false. Hick called this verification **eschatological verification**. Religious statements, therefore, are meaningful under the verification principle as they can be verified. To illustrate his point, Hick gives the parable of the Celestial City.

#### The Parable of the Celestial City

An atheist and a theist are walking along a road. The theist believes that it will lead to the Celestial City. The atheist believes that it is a road to nowhere. Along the way, they have adventures and experiences. The theist interprets them as being sent by God to prepare them for life in the Celestial City. The atheist interprets them as random chance. Only when they reach the end of the road will they know the truth. Hick argues that a religious believer makes will not be able to be shown to be true or false until death.

#### Criticism

However, the problem with this is that religious language will only be verified if there is an afterlife. If religious believers are wrong and atheists are right, death will be the end of everything. Nothing will be verified as all senses will also die. Also, we could argue that it is not possible to verify anything outside our physical world.

### Language as an Expression of a Blik – R M Hare (1919–2002)

Hare argued that the verification and falsification principles apply only to cognitive statements and thus that they do not apply to religious language, which is non-cognitive. For Hare, religious language does not make factual claims, but it is still meaningful. It doesn't give knowledge, but it does influence the way in which people look at the world. Hare gives the example of a university student who is convinced that all of the lecturers are out to kill him. He does not have any empirical data to back up his claim, and he does not accept any evidence which is contrary to his belief. However, the belief is meaningful to him as it affects his life. Hare called religious beliefs 'blik's – they are not verifiable or falsifiable, but they impact the ways in which people look at the world and their lives and, therefore, have meaning to them.

#### Criticism

However, religious believers would claim that religious statements have a real meaning. Religious beliefs contained within them affect believers' lives. Thus, when a believer says 'I believe in God', it is not just an expression of a blik, but a statement about a God whom they believe exists in a real way and who loves in a perfect sense. It is not just an attempt to reduce religious beliefs to simply the effect they have on individuals, but something more than that.

### Language Games – Ludwig Wittgenstein (1886–1951)

Although originally Wittgenstein argued for the need for scientific evidence to back up religious claims, influencing the ideas of the Vienna Circle, his attitude towards religious language changed as he got older, and in *Philosophical Investigations* we find Wittgenstein arguing that religious language is meaningful for those who use it (for participants in the religious language game).

Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that language is not just concerned with describing things. To understand something, it is not enough to know the meaning of the words used to describe it. Rather, we need to look at how the words are used and the meaning they have for people. He adopted a **non-cognitive** approach to religious language, stating that religious language is not about making factual claims, but about expressing a way of life.

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different kinds of language, such as the language of science and the language of religion. Religious language games, which are the linguistic parts of different ‘forms of life’. Thus, if a Christian is part of a Christian ‘form of life’, they will have special access to and understanding of Christian language to determine what is true and what is false within this form of life. This is why some atheists who criticise religious language arguably do so because they do not understand religious language – they have misunderstood the meaning that religious language has for believers. Understanding religious language from a scientific perspective would, for Wittgenstein, be like using the rules of football to judge a game of football.

This means that religious language is meaningful when understood in the context of the religious ‘form of life’. In other words, for people in the religious ‘form of life’ religious language contains meaning. People who do not understand the rules and therefore cannot understand the language game do not understand the rules and therefore cannot understand the language game. Believers who make mistakes about religious language are called ‘category mistakes’ according to Wittgenstein. This is a scientist who misunderstands Christian belief in the existence of the ‘soul’ and tries to find a materially present, physical object. In *The Puzzle of God*, Peter Vardy argues that religious language games may involve reducing God to what is understood by the religious community.

*In this way of thinking, God exists. God really, really, truly, truly exists. But God is distinct from the world; he is not some being who is apart from the world and who creates the world. God is instead a reality within the believing community. (Vardy – The Puzzle of God)*

**Strengths of Language Game Theory**

- A great strength of language game theory is that it defends the religious ‘language games’, such as the scientific and atheistic language game. It allows religious language to be meaningful, and the fact that the statements they make are not meaningful in other language games is irrelevant.
- When believers use religious language in a non-cognitive way, ‘God’ is not limited to words. His mystery is, therefore, maintained. In showing that religious language is a type of language, language game theory manages to avoid some of the problems of other ideas about religious language, such as the verification and falsification principles.

**Weaknesses of Language Game Theory**

- If each of the different religious faiths is playing a different language game, it is difficult to have discussions about their religious ideas or about the existence of God. In the end, it is important for different religious traditions to discuss their ideas and to find common ground. Do Wittgenstein’s ideas make this interfaith dialogue impossible?
- Religious believers are involved in many different ‘forms of life’. This means that religious language is completely isolated and that believers must find common ground between all the different language games they play. Thus, non-believers must be able to understand religious language to decide whether or not it has meaning.
- Religious believers may argue that their language about God is not to be understood by non-believers and is objective and intended to be meaningful for everyone, not just believers.

Some religious groups feel that it is very important to convince others of the veracity of their beliefs. However, according to Wittgenstein, non-believers cannot understand the language of religion. Many religious people would thus object to the way in which Wittgenstein’s ideas are used to justify religious beliefs.

**Activity:** Create a table giving the strengths and weaknesses of language game theory.



OTHER VIEWS OF THE NATURE OF RELIGION

Religious Language as Symbolic – Paul Tillich (1886–1965)

Tillich argues that symbols and metaphors help us to understand God. He says that it is important to distinguish between signs and symbols. Signs are things which point to something else, such as road signs. We learn their meanings, and the meaning can easily be changed if everyone agrees. Although a symbol also points to something beyond itself, it ‘participates in that to which it points’ (Tillich).

The example of a flag is given by Tillich to explain the meaning of a symbol and its distinction from a sign. The flag is a symbol as it contains within it the power and dignity of the country it represents. The meaning of a symbol is something which grows and is not just something which is decided, and this makes it different from a sign. Tillich felt that symbols ‘unlock dimensions and elements of our soul’.

According to Tillich, God can be described only by using symbols. Symbols, for Tillich, are ‘self-transcending’, which means that they mean something within themselves but also point to a higher or greater reality. Religious symbols point to ‘Being Itself’. Religious faith is a state of being ‘ultimately concerned’ with the ultimate (God) and this **ultimate concern** can, according to Tillich, be expressed only through the language of symbols. For Tillich, the only non-symbolic, literal statement that can be made about God is that he is **Being Itself**. Every other statement about God, such as that he is loving, personal, good, etc. is symbolic. Therefore, God can be known through a collection of symbols which point beyond themselves to that which is transcendent and ultimate.

Weaknesses of Religious Language as Symbolic

- 1. John Hick suggests that Tillich does not really make clear how religious symbols ‘participate in that to which they point’. He questions whether the symbol ‘God is good’ participates in ‘Being Itself’ or whether a flag participates in the power and dignity of the country it represents. Hick’s argument that everything participates in ‘Being Itself’ makes it difficult to understand the ways in which symbols participate in Being Itself and the ways in which **Being Itself** is expressed. Due to these problems, Hick feels that Tillich is unsuccessful in his claim that religious language is symbolic.
- 2. Symbols are intended to help us to understand something. However, symbols represent things which are outside human experience. We cannot check for a correct insight into God or the ultimate and, therefore, the idea of religious symbols is unfalsifiable, which means, for thinkers such as Anthony Flew, that they are not rational.

Strengths of Religious Language as Symbolic

Like Aquinas, Tillich shows that it is impossible to completely and accurately describe God. We can get some understanding of God through symbols, but the human words are inadequate when describing the ultimate, who is so perfect. Therefore, Tillich allows us to express our experiences and ideas of God while maintaining the mystery of the Divine and with

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## The Doctrine of Analogy – Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

Aquinas argued that language about God is not univocal (the words used to describe God mean exactly the same thing as the words we use to describe human beings) or equivocal (the words we use to describe God don't mean something completely different from the words used to describe human beings), but is analogical. Aquinas argued that there is a similarity between God and humans as God created us, and, therefore, we can make an analogy between our qualities, such as 'goodness', and God's perfect qualities, such as 'all-goodness'.

Aquinas believed that God created all of our good qualities and, therefore, they are a reflection of the qualities of God. Thus, there is a link between Jim's love and God's love. God created the love which is found within Jim. However, because God is superior to humans, God's love is an infinite and perfect form of the love within Jim. Aquinas is attempting to explain the qualities of God and language used to describe him because we are linked to the Christian idea that God is superior to human beings.

We can use an analogy downwards; for example, we can understand the statement 'the faithfulness of a dog is lesser than the faithfulness of human beings' by understanding the quality of faithfulness in human beings. In this case, the faithfulness of a dog is lesser than the faithfulness of human beings, but, nonetheless, the statement 'the faithfulness of a dog is lesser than the faithfulness of human beings' is true. Similarly, for Aquinas, we can also use analogy upwards. We understand the qualities of human beings, and, therefore, we can go some way towards understanding 'goodness' in God when the word is applied to God.

Therefore, Aquinas felt that our language about God is analogous. He stated that

1. **Analogy of attribution** – God created humans, which means that humans are made in the image and likeness of God. Thus, human qualities are a reflection of God's good qualities. Thus, goodness in humans is a reflection of goodness in God. Thus, because we have an understanding of goodness, which is a reflection of God's goodness, through analogy we can understand what goodness is like in God. Analogies downwards (to understand qualities of animals which are lesser versions of qualities in God) and upwards (to understand qualities in their infinite and perfect form).
2. **Analogy of proportionality** – The amount of 'goodness', for example, that a human being is 'good' is proportional to their nature. Thus, a human being is 'good' in a limited way, as no human can achieve perfect goodness. God, on the other hand, has a perfect goodness. Thus, when qualities such as 'goodness' are applied to God, they are in an infinite and perfect form.

### Exam prep 3:

1. Examine the idea of religious language as symbolic, with reference to Tillich.
2. Examine the idea of religious language as analogical, with reference to Aquinas.

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## Strengths and Weaknesses of Analogy

**Rudolf Otto** argued that when a person describes a religious experience, they have words available to them, even though they are not perfect. Religious experiences are, as he said, incredibly difficult to explain, but people who experience them feel that they must have meaning to them to describe the experience. This seems to support Aquinas's use of language analogously.

The use of analogy is criticised by philosophers who claim that it presupposes belief in God. It can be used to help us to understand the word 'good' in the statement 'God is good', but it is the word 'God' that non-believers have difficulty understanding or believing in. If an analogy may help a religious believer to understand the way in which language is used, but if one does not believe in God, it is very unconvincing.

Another criticism is that God is believed to be hidden from human beings and therefore we can never truly understand his qualities. Surely we can never really know what wisdom, love, or power, as applied to God, is like. Aquinas would answer by saying that we cannot know God's qualities, but we can know that he is like something who can never truly grasp the perfect and infinite God. Analogy is not meant to tell us what God is like; it is intended to give Christians a way of expressing their faith in language, without claiming to know the divine.

In 1957, I T Ramsey attempted to restate Aquinas's point that analogy is used in religious language so that we use **models** and **qualifiers** in our language about God.

A model is a phrase that we use to describe something in our ordinary lives, but we use it to describe God. An example of a model is 'God is good'. As we know what 'good' means in ordinary life, we can use it as a model to help us to understand what God is like. However, the model is not meant to tell us to more fully understand God. For Ramsey, it needs to be **qualified**. Thus, to tell us more about God, we add the qualifier 'infinitely', so we are left with 'God is infinitely good'. This will lead us to a deeper understanding of God's goodness, giving us an insight into God which we should respond to with faith.

Ramsey's ideas do seem to strengthen Aquinas's argument that religious language is meaningful. He feels that qualifiers can lead us to an insight into what God is like. However, as we cannot fully understand God, we may ponder upon the infinite goodness of God and thus may never gain this insight, so the language is meaningless.

## The Via Negativa – The Apophatic Way

Religious believers struggle to describe God, and many claim that it is impossible to describe God. However, supporters of the via negativa approach argue that it may be possible to describe God by speaking negatively about Him, i.e. by stating what he is *not*. **Dionysius** (a fifth-century anonymous Greek theologian and philosopher) argued in *Mystical Theology* that we can only understand what God is *not* like before we can understand what he *is* like. By ruling out all of the things that God is not, we can realise what he is like. This is known as the **principle of negation**.

Supporters of the **via negativa**, such as Peter Cole, argue that it avoids all of the problems of using human language to describe what God is (problems associated with using religious language literally and/or symbolically).

In *Philosophy of Religion*, Cole argues that 'By denying all descriptions of God, you are not expressing disbelief of God rather than unbelief and scepticism.'

Believers themselves may support this idea as they believe that God is unknowable and cannot be described with human words. However, we can use language to explain what God is like to give us a better understanding of God. For example, 'God is not physical' and 'God is not evil' are statements that religious believers can understand and leave them with some understanding of what God is like.

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Criticisms

- Brian Davis argues that the via negativa is useless as it doesn't actually tell us anything about God. Thompson argues that we cannot worship a God who is only understood in negative terms.
- Believers do make positive statements about God – they do this all of the time. It is not that God is like, not what he is not like.
- Thompson argues that we cannot state that God gives moral principles if we cannot say anything positive about him. If we cannot say that 'God is good', then we cannot use the idea of God to tell us what is wrong. As religious groups do feel that God guides them through life, it is not surprising that religious language in a negative way.
- Aquinas believed that we could come to some kind of understanding of God through the via negativa. However, he believed that our understanding of, and language about, God is limited. We *can have* some (albeit limited) positive knowledge about God, and so we can use positive language about God.

Activities

1. Write your own definitions of religious language as non-cognitive, a 'blik', an analogical and the via negativa.
2. Which of these definitions do you like best, and why?
3. Which do you think is the least effective method of defining religious language?

Exam prep 4:

1. Examine religious language as an expression of a 'blik'.
2. Examine the idea of eschatological verification.
3. 'The via negativa shows that religious language can be meaningful.' Evaluate this claim.
4. 'The strengths of an analogical view of religious language outweigh the weaknesses.' Evaluate this claim.
5. 'The verification principle means that all religious claims are meaningless.' Evaluate this claim.

# MIRACLES

## DIFFERING UNDERSTANDINGS OF ‘MIRACLES’

### Are miracles ‘real’ events?

Realist View	Anti-Realist View
Miracles happen when God chooses to intervene in the world to help humans. God causes miracles to happen, and they reveal something profound about God.	We can’t prove that God exists. If miracles have natural explanations, they are not miracles. If miracles have no natural explanations, they are open to interpretation. If miracles are not real, they still reveal something about the human mind.

### Realist View of Miracles

Most advocates of the realist position would support the definition of ‘miracle’ as a **violation of the laws of nature**. Although not a believer or a supporter of miracles himself, Hume argued that believers define a miracle as an event which involves God deciding to intervene in the natural world, such as gravity:



*A miracle [is] a transgression of a law of nature, by the volition of the Deity or by the imposition of some other power, which has established the law.*  
(David Hume – An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding)

David Hume

Examples of such ‘violations’ are raising from the dead, healing miracles and natural events.

### Raising from the dead – the raising of Lazarus (John 11:17-44)

Mary and Martha were sisters and Lazarus was their brother. Jesus was friends with them. He heard that Lazarus was ill, but thought he would be okay. Then Jesus received news that Lazarus had died. He waited two days and then he went to visit Mary and Martha.

When he arrived, he found that Lazarus had been dead for four days. Mary and Martha were both crying. Jesus said to them, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even if they die. And those who live and believe in me will never die.’ Jesus was moved by the emotion of the situation and he cried.

They went to the tomb which contained Lazarus’ body. He asked for the stone to be rolled away. The women were concerned that there would be a smell from the body, as Lazarus had been dead for four days. Jesus said, ‘Lazarus! Come out!’ and to everyone’s amazement, Lazarus came out of the tomb. Jesus raised him from the dead.

### Healing miracle: Jesus heals the paralysed man (Luke 5:17-26)

One day, Jesus was teaching. People had come from miles around to listen to him. The crowd was very crowded. Jesus had God’s power within him to heal the sick.

A group of men had heard about Jesus, and they carried their paralysed friend on a mat. They could not get him through the crowds, so they decided to take him to the roof. They took some tiles off the roof to make a hole and lowered the man down on his mat. Jesus saw how much faith they had and said to the man, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’

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The teachers of the law got annoyed as they thought Jesus was being blasphemous. Jesus said, ‘*Why do you think such things? Is it easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven” and walk?” I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to get up, pick up your bed and walk.*’ The man got up, picked up his bed and walked home. Everyone was amazed.

**Nature miracle – Jesus walks on water (Mark 6:45–52)**

Jesus had been preaching and a great crowd had gathered around him. He asked the crowd to get into the boat and sail to Bethsaida, which was on the other side of a lake and away from the crowd, and he went up on the hill to pray to God.

In the evening, the boat was in the middle of the lake. Jesus saw that the disciples were rowing against the wind. He walked to them on the water. They were scared and they thought that he was a ghost. He said, ‘*Courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.*’ He got into the boat, and the wind immediately died down. The disciples were amazed.

**Anti-realist View of Miracles**

**An anti-realist position on miracles fits more easily with a definition of ‘miracle’ as an event of religious significance.** The anti-realist view is that miracles are not caused by God or are not themselves something about God as they make sense to believers who are operating within a religious framework. They are symbolic, rather than literal, and stories of miracles allow believers to share a common faith. The anti-realist position is that miracles are open to interpretation and can be interpreted differently by different people. In today’s world, different people can have different interpretations and interpretations of the same event/story without contradiction. ‘Truth’ is something which is subjective rather than objective. Believers may find religious truth in accounts of miracles despite the fact that others cannot find any meaning at all.

R F Holland defined ‘miracle’ as ‘an event of religious significance’. This means that an event is interpreted religiously by a believer. Events occur in people’s everyday lives which are extraordinary and do not break any laws of nature, but which can be considered miraculous. For example, a couple have been trying to have a baby for 10 years. IVF has not worked and they have given up hope. They have prayed countless times for a baby and then one day, they discover that they are going to have a baby. The couple regard this event as a real miracle, though a woman getting pregnant is a natural event. They may feel that it is affirming of their faith and desire for them to be happy, for example.

This view of miracles leaves them very much open to interpretation. This could be seen as allowing miracles to be easily discredited as the ‘wrong’ interpretation of a natural event. In a realist, postmodern world, there are no ‘wrong’ interpretations – the fact that believers and others perceive as merely natural events makes sense to them and reveals something about them; the fact that others will not see God at work is not relevant and does nothing to disprove the interpretation. A miracle which violates a law of nature can be shown to be ‘wrong’ if the laws of nature have not been broken and there is another explanation for what has happened. However, to do anything to *prove* that a religious interpretation of a natural event is correct is impossible.

**Activity:** Which definition of miracle do you prefer: an event which breaks the laws of nature or an event of religious significance? Explain your answer.

**Exam prep 1:**

1. Examine realist and anti-realist views on miracles.
2. Examine definitions of miracles as violations of natural law and natural events.

## COMPARISON OF THE KEY IDEAS OF DAVID HUME AND MAURICE WILES ON MIRACLES

### David Hume on Miracles (1711–1776)

In his book *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, David Hume presents his famous critique of religious miracles. Rather than arguing that miracles don't happen (which would be impossible to prove without doubt), Hume states that it is unacceptable to use miracles as a foundation on which to build religious belief.

1. **Insufficient evidence:** Hume felt that scientific 'laws' could not be absolute truths. He stated that the laws of nature are felt to be true because they have been experienced many times. The fact that these laws have been experienced through the senses on many occasions means that there is a high *probability* that they are true – it is not that they are universal laws – although this cannot be proven. For Hume, therefore, whether or not one believes that something is true is dependent on the evidence for it being true.

*A wise man... proportions his belief to the evidence. (Hume – An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding)*

Thus, Hume believed that miracles are **extremely unlikely events**. Our observation of the world tells us that it works in a uniform way. For example, the sun rises every morning and the majority of people in the world never claim to have witnessed a miracle, which Hume felt that it is more likely that people who claim to have seen a miracle are lying than that a miracle actually happened.

*A hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a probability that approaches to certainty, though it is not absolute; but a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contrary, destroy the strong degree of assurance.' (Hume – An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding)*

Hume also felt that there had never been a miracle which had been witnessed by trustworthy people to make it believable.

2. **Human testimony:** Hume believed that there are many occasions when one might believe in a miracle, especially when there is no scientific evidence to back it up. He felt that religious people are often inclined to believe in miracles to be true and that this leads them to accept that a miracle has happened without sufficient evidence to prove that it has. He also stated that believers have a vested interest in believing that an event was a miracle, as it affirms their faith. We cannot, therefore, trust their testimony. Also, Hume argues, miracles are often reported from 'ignorant and barbarous people' who have not been scientifically checked. As our experience tells us that the laws of nature are uniform and cannot be checked, we should distrust the testimony of religious people on miracles.

*We frequently hesitate concerning the reports of others... We entertain a suspicion, when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are few, or of a low rank; when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony with too violent asseverations. There are many other particulars of the same kind, which tend to destroy the force of any argument derived from human testimony. (Hume – An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding)*

*No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a nature, that it would be more miraculous that the fact which it endeavours to establish... (Hume – An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding)*

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3. **Miracles from different religious traditions conflict:** Hume states that all religions support their particular beliefs. Therefore, if one religion is correct, the others are wrong.

*The miracles of each religion, if accepted, disprove the truth of the other religions and the credibility of the miracles of those other religions. In other words, miracles validating religious beliefs – are mutually destructive across religions.’ (Hume)*

Hume states that, ‘In matters of religion, whatever is different is contrary.’

Hume felt that Christians argue that their miracles are correct, showing that other religions are wrong. Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, etc. all argue the same thing and should disregard the miracles of all religious traditions.

*Evidence for a miracle wrought in one religion is only evidence against the truth of a miracle wrought in another religion ... the two miracles, if they happen, would be evidence that the two religious systems incompatible with each other. (Hume)*

### Summary

Hume felt that we must consider miracles in terms of how probable they are. If a miracle has taken place, we must accept that the law of nature which has been violated was not true. If we observe someone levitate, we must, therefore, reject the law of gravity. However, gravity is at work every day of our lives. It therefore seems highly unlikely to reject the existence of these laws of nature and accept that a miracle has occurred. It seems more probable that the law of nature is true and the person who has observed what they consider to be a miracle is mistaken.

*When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, than that the fact he relates should really have happened. (Hume – An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding)*

### Maurice Wiles on Miracles (1925-2005)

Wiles’s objection to miracles is very different from that of David Hume as Wiles was a Christian who believed that the idea of an interventionist God who intervenes in the physical world to perform miracles is incompatible with the Christian understanding of God.

For Wiles, creation should be understood as one continuous activity of God, and not as a one-off event. It is part of God’s creative activity. It therefore makes no sense to speak of God intervening in the world he created.

Wiles argued that belief in a God who intervenes to perform miracles is also incompatible with an omnibenevolent God, for why would God help some and not others? Why would God perform seemingly pointless miracles, such as the liquefaction of the blood of St Gennaro, which is anticipated in a special ceremony each year, but then let atrocities such as the Holocaust happen? Wiles, would be unworthy of worship.

When it comes to miracles, we have, for Wiles, two choices. We can either accept miracles as the result of random actions of an interventionist God who is not all-loving, fair or just, or we can reject miracles and retain belief in the God of classical theism. If we choose the latter, we must accept that miracles do not happen as God does not intervene in the physical world.

We could say that Wiles adopts an anti-realist position on miracles as he believes that miracles did not actually happen; they are just there to teach Christians about God and help them to live better lives.

#### Exam prep 2:

1. Examine the key ideas of Hume on miracles.
2. Examine the key ideas of Wiles on miracles.
3. ‘The objection to miracles from Wiles is more damaging to miracles than the objection from Hume. Evaluate this claim.’

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How Do These Different Views on Miracles

Does it Matter Whether We Adopt a realist or an Anti-realist View of Miracles

**Yes:** Christian literalists would argue that every word of the Bible is the direct word of God and should be interpreted literally. The power of God and Jesus was demonstrated in the miracles performed. Miracles are God breaking the laws of nature. We must, therefore, realise that the miracles have no natural explanation and have no for any other interpretation. God chooses when and where to intervene, and this is a matter of divine, unfailing wisdom. It may seem to some, such as Maurice Wiles, that God’s actions are arbitrary, unfair or unjust, but we have no right to question God’s actions. He has intervened in the world, a reason which we cannot understand due to our finite minds.

Richard Swinburne argued that, given the omnipotent, omnibenevolent nature of God, miracles are bound to take place. God has the power to perform miracles and will also have the desire to perform miracles to make our lives better. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable to believe in an interventionist God who performs miracles in the physical world. Miracles are rare events which occur as and when they do happen. They are not to be interpreted symbolically, but literally.

Some believers may argue that miracles should *always* be interpreted symbolically. They may feel that a literal interpretation of the Bible leaves Christianity open to scientific criticism and philosophy and risks making the religion seem out of touch with the modern world. Science often provides a more plausible explanation for apparently ‘miraculous’ events. They may state that we would need more evidence than is afforded to us by ‘miracles’ to reject naturalism. Regarding miracles as symbolic stories which provide an insight into life and/or God’s nature, rather than as modern scientific ideas and thus allows religion to remain relevant in today’s world.

**No:** Those who adopt the anti-realist position are likely to feel that it does not matter how miracles are interpreted literally or symbolically. Anti-realists will mostly feel that miracles can be explained in natural ways by different people without contradiction. Some believers will interpret miracles as symbolic – if this interpretation helps them to understand God and/or life, then this interpretation is valid.

Violations of the Laws of Nature or Natural Events?

The way in which we define ‘miracle’ is important to our understanding of these events. If we view miracles as events which break the laws of nature, we face the problems highlighted by Maurice Wiles. How can we reject all of the evidence we have for the laws of nature and accept that they are broken when we see these laws of nature in effect each day? Can we reject all of the evidence provided by science which shows that the world works in an ordered and regulated way? Why did God allow millions to suffer and die during the Holocaust but spare the life of a saint?

However, if we view miracles as natural events which are just interpreted religiously, the problems disappear. It is possible that believers understand and see God working through natural events to see these things (even though God is working for them). It is also possible that non-believers understand about God and life through apparently ‘ordinary’ events in life – God is not directly intervening in the world, constantly creating, and believers may have an intuition of God which allows them to see things in a way in which non-believers cannot. However, many would argue that natural events are not miracles. A miracle must be something out of the ordinary, something which breaks a law of nature. If we accept that we could exist without God and that all natural events which happen in our world are simply the result of biology and evolution. A non-believer will thus never be able to see the miracle in what believers see as a miracle.

A believer who feels that God works through miracles, either through violating laws of nature or through natural events which are evidence of his creative action, will not allow another person’s interpretation of ‘miracles’ to count against their beliefs. Similarly, a non-believer who feels that there is no God and that natural events are simply the inevitable consequence of evolutionary processes will fail to be convinced by claims of religious significance seen by believers. They may debate the issue with each other or agree to disagree on this issue.

Exam prep 3:

1.

‘A person who does not believe in miracles cannot be religious.’ Evaluate this claim.

2.

‘Miracles support belief in God.’ Evaluate this claim.

# SELF, DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

Human beings are made up of a physical body and a conscious mind. The body is made of material elements, such as carbon. The physical facts about our bodies, such as height, are not affected by our thoughts.

Our minds are made up of conscious thoughts. Two characteristics of our minds are:

- **Qualia** – Experiences we feel, such as the taste of chocolate. They are qualitative because the way we experience things is unique to us and we have to experience them. '[Qualia are] properties of the inside-out world that cannot be seen from the outside' (John Puddefoot)
- **Intentionality** – Intentionality is 'aboutness'. Our mental states are about things we have experienced in the world or things which have not been directly experienced.

Before we think about life after death, we need to think about the nature of human beings. Our ideas on these issues will affect what we think about concepts such as the soul.

## THE NATURE AND EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL AND THE BODY

Philosophers have different ideas about the link between body and mind/soul:

1. The body is real. The mind is simply a vehicle through which we process our experiences. The mind is part of the body – the body and the 'mind' are one and the same thing. This is **monism**.
2. The body and the mind are **dualistic** – they are two distinct substances. This is the view of many philosophers, who must ask: if the mind and the body are distinct, how do they interact?
3. Our bodies are not real and are an illusion. Only our minds are real and they create the 'reality' we believe we have in a world which they have created (**idealism**).

### Materialism

Materialists do not accept the idea of a 'soul'. For materialists, humans are just physical beings. When they die, they simply cease to exist, and no part of them lives on after death. What some people call 'events' are simply physical events occurring in physical bodies. For example, music is just vibrations in the air, paintings are nothing but dots on a canvas, and emotions, such as love, are just psychochemical reactions in our brains.

### Gilbert Ryle – *The Concept of Mind* (1949)

Ryle felt that the idea of a soul is a 'category mistake', meaning that it is a mistake in the use of language. He believed that people are wrong when they speak of the mind and the body as two separate things as if the soul is something which can be found within a person. Thus, he termed the soul the 'ghost in the machine', suggesting that it did not exist. It can never be 'found' in the way that the dichotomy of 'body and mind' suggests. To illustrate his point, he gave the example of a foreigner watching a game of cricket and asking, 'What is the team spirit?' as if it were something extra which could be found. Another example is a visitor who visits Oxford University and sees the colleges, libraries and offices, only to ask, 'Where is the university?'

So, for Ryle, the soul is not something extra in a person, and talking about a person's soul is just as meaningless as talking about the university's soul. A person's mind is part of them and their bodies, just as the colleges and the libraries are the university.

*When two terms belong to the same category, it is proper to construct conjunctions. Thus a purchaser may say that he bought a left-hand glove and a right-hand glove, a left-hand glove, a right-hand glove and a pair of gloves ... Now the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine maintains that there exist both bodies and minds; that there are mechanical causes of mental processes. I shall argue that these and other analogous conjunctions are absurd; but, it must not be shown that either of the illegitimately conjoined propositions is absurd in itself, that there occur mental processes. Doing long division is a mental process and so is the phrase 'there occur mental processes' does not mean the same sort of thing as 'there occur physical processes' and, therefore, that it makes no sense to conjoin or disjoin the two.' (Ryle, 1949, p. 101)*

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Hard Materialism	Soft Materialism
Humans are nothing but physical bodies. Consciousness is simply brain activity. The mind cannot be separated from the body. When the body dies, so too will the brain.	Not everything can be reduced to the physical. Consciousness is a brain process. The mind and the body are the same entity, but they exist independently from one another, but the body can exist without the mind. When something is troubling our minds, there may be a physical cause. We cannot do anything independently of our bodies. When the physical body dies, the mind must also die.

Why do materialists reject belief in survival after death?

Life depends upon a functioning brain, nervous system and physical body. Death is the end of the brain, nervous system and physical body. Therefore, a person’s life ends at death and cannot be supported.

Do all materialists reject life after death?

Materialists state that there will never be any scientific evidence for the soul – it is not possible to prove whether or not such a thing as a soul exists. They argue that a soul cannot exist if the body is made up only of physical matter.

Recreation Theory

Some materialists do not believe that death is the end and do believe that there is life after death. If the body and the soul are one entity, life after death can only happen if the whole body continues to exist. **the body** is the belief that the body, as well as the soul, is raised from the dead. For materialists here, as the body decays after death – how then can the body be resurrected? For materialists, a person’s **identity** is about the physical appearance, and thus a resurrection would require as they did before death in order to maintain their **identity**. How can this happen?

Solution number one – John Hick’s replicas

Hick argued that it might be possible for humans to exist after death as an exact replica of themselves. This would mean that they had the same **identity** and thus that they would be immortal. If God is omnipotent, Hick argues that he has the power to create exact replicas of all who have ever lived. Each replica has each individual’s memories and characteristics. For Hick, there is no resurrection of the body. God will recreate us. He explains this idea in his book *Philosophy of Religion*:

... as a resurrection replica in a different world altogether, a resurrection world in which there are no persons. This world occupies its own space distinct from that with which we are familiar. No object in the resurrection world is not situated at any distance or in any direction from any other object in the world, although each object in either world is spatially related to every other object in the world.

Hick demonstrated that the resurrection of the body is logically possible, and thus it is possible to believe that there is also a place where resurrected bodies live after death. Hick’s view that the mind and the body are one as the body (in replica form) is necessary for his theory.

Solution number two – St Paul

Hick’s ideas are compatible with those of St Paul. Paul stated that after death there will be a spiritual body. It will be linked to the earthly body, but will be better, a seed from which it grows, although they are, essentially, the same thing and have the same identity.

Someone will ask, ‘How can the dead be raised to life? What kind of body will they have?’ Paul answers: ‘If you sow a seed in the ground it does not sprout to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body you wish it to be, nor the full-bodied plant that will later grow from it. You sow a seed, and God gives it a body as he wishes; he gives each seed its own proper body. And the flesh of the seed is of the same kind of flesh, animals another, birds, another, and fish another. And there are different kinds of heavenly bodies; the beauty that belongs to heavenly bodies is different from the beauty of the earth. The sun has its own beauty, the moon another beauty; and even among stars there are different kinds of beauty. This is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is raised, it will be beautiful and strong. When buried it is a physical body; when raised it is a spiritual body. There is, of course, a physical body, so there has to be a spiritual body. (1 Cor. 15: 36-44)

## Problems with recreation theory

Many philosophers argue that despite the identical physical appearance and memories, a replica will not be the same 'I' who died. Thus, there is a problem with **identity**. Of the following two possibilities for the replica body, the latter would be true:

1. First I existed in this world, then I died, and then I existed again in the next world.
2. First I existed in this world, then I died, and then God created someone else with my memories.

## John Hick - supporting the idea of recreation

To solve the problem that the replica might not be the same person, John Hick carried out experiments. He wanted to prove that the 'I' in this world is the same as the 'I' in the next world. He asked us to imagine a man called John Smith who lives in America. At one moment he is in America and then he reappears at the same moment in India. He states that the John Smith who appears in India has the same memories, fingerprints and emotions. He thinks of himself as being the same person. With his friends from America and they still regard him as John Smith despite his change of location. If everyone is concerned, the John Smith who appears in India is the exact same John Smith as the John Smith in America. Now, Hick asks us to imagine that John Smith died and that God resurrected him. Surely we should accept that this John Smith has the same **identity** as the John Smith in America.

## Dualism - The Immortality of the Soul

Dualists believe that the mind/soul and body are separate – the body is simply an object in the physical world. The body is contingent, as it will eventually die, but the mind/soul is immortal. The mind/soul is a 'self' and has higher qualities, such as truth, goodness and justice. If a person possesses these higher qualities, then their soul will live on after death. Thus, dualism stresses the immortality of the soul.

## Plato - *The Republic*

Plato believed that the soul belongs to a higher reality than the body as the soul is immortal. Plato believed that there is a perfect idea, or form, for everything in existence. For every person, there is an ideal person, for every dog, there is an ideal dog, and so on. Everything is linked to these universal ideas, or forms. The idea is more important than the physical thing which is linked to it, and because they are not physical things, ideas belong to the **realm**, which is more real than the physical realm.

The soul is able to understand the realm of ideas, which belong to the spiritual realm, while the body is in the physical or material realm and receives impressions through the senses. The soul wants to know eternal truths beyond the world. The soul wants to travel to the realm of ideas to understand them, whereas the body wants to be involved in the material realm and receive impressions through the senses. The soul tries to steer the mind towards the spiritual realm. All of the things we remember are a memory of the contact we had with forms or ideas before our souls became embodied in a body. The aim of the soul is to break free of the prison of the material body and leave the physical realm and travel to the realm of ideas, where it will be free to think about the true, the beautiful and the good. The body cannot survive death, but the soul can. The soul is the true essence of a person, and what lives on after death is our personal identity, or the real 'I' or the true **identity**.

## Aquinas

Aquinas was influenced by Aristotle, who argued that the soul animated the body. He called the soul the **anima**, as it animates the body. He felt that the soul acts independently of the body. He argued that things which are divisible (can be divided into different parts) are subject to decay. As the soul is indivisible, it does not decay and thus is able to survive death. For Aquinas, each soul is linked to a particular body, and so each soul is an individual. Even when the body dies, the soul retains the **identity** of the body to which it was linked.

*Now the soul is what makes our body live; so the soul is the primary source of all our activities. It is the soul that differentiates levels of life: growth, sensation, movement, understanding, mind and reason. (Aquinas – Summa Theologica)*

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# DESCARTES' ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE

## René Descartes – Cartesian Dualism

For Descartes, all things which are not physical belong to the mind/soul. This includes a feeling which we cannot put into words. Although the mind and the body interact, they are separate. The mind/soul is concerned with thoughts and emotions and gives us the ability to think. 'I think, therefore I am.' Mental reality is not in the physical world of space, as it cannot be empirically verified. Descartes believed that the mind/soul is not part of the physical world and is not the same as the brain.

### A summary of Descartes' ideas:

- The mind is not part of the physical body and is not material.
- The mind is a substance 'whose essence is to think', and so it takes up no physical space.
- The body has a material form which can be described and has features such as weight and height, but it is not a case for the mind/soul.
- The mind is the place in which all feelings, sensations and thoughts are known and experienced.
- The body performs all physical activities which can be observed by others.
- The mind and body interact with each other, as the mind can cause events in the body and the body can cause events in the mind.

## Descartes and Identity

Descartes believed that our identity comes from our thoughts and our reasoning. Therefore, we could survive without our bodies and maintain our identities – remember that we do not need our bodies in order to be intellectually aware and thus that our minds are immortal. Descartes stated that the mind is 'I' – it is our **identity** and makes us who we are. Our physical appearance, our personalities do not change, and thus our minds are who we are. Our mind is our soul.

Descartes felt that when a person dies, their soul continues to live with God. The soul has the individuality and identity that was contained within their physical body on earth.

*Our soul is of a nature entirely independent of the body, and consequently ... it is immortal. And since we cannot see any other causes which destroy the soul, we are naturally immortal. (Descartes – Discourse on the Method)*

**Exam prep 1:** Examine Descartes' argument for the existence of the soul.

## Problems with Dualism

1. Descartes suggests that our physical bodies have no impact upon our identity. Are our identities made up only of the memories of the mind? Bernard Williams argues that our identities are made up of more than just our memories. Memories and personality can be made up of physical experiences. Identity cannot be made up of mental activity alone. For Williams, identity is made up of physical characteristics – personal identity depends upon the ways in which we recognize ourselves. Without bodies we cannot be fully identified.
2. Modern science reveals that the mind is dependent upon the physical brain. The mind cannot exist on its own. If surgeons split a brain into two parts, they create two minds. This shows that the mind is completely dependent upon the physical brain and is not our 'soul'.
3. If minds are not physical, they should not be able to affect the physical world. If the mind thinks something, the body acts in a way which impacts the material world. This shows that the mind is strongly linked to the physical and is not our 'soul'.

**Exam prep 2:** 'There is no such thing as the soul.' Evaluate this claim.

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## THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTINUING PERSONAL EXISTENCE

### What is Resurrection?

Christianity teaches that there is an afterlife and supplies evidence of this in the account of Jesus's resurrection. Christians believe that on the Day of Judgement God will raise the dead and bring the dead back to life as spiritual beings. Thus, Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he shall die, yet shall he live.' (John 11:25). St Paul taught that we will have a spiritual body (*soma pneumatikon*), rather than a physical body. The spirit will retain our memories and characteristics, which will live forever in a spiritual world.

*For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be raised imperishable. We must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (1 Cor 15:52-54)*

Keith Ward argues that evidence we have gained of what happens after death (i.e. the afterlife) suggests that there must be a spiritual reality as well as a physical reality and that there must be something that goes on after death.

As we have seen, Thomas Aquinas believed that the soul is the eternal part of human beings. The soul is what makes us who we are and retains our memories and personalities. The soul is part of humans, which does not decay, which survives death and joins God in the afterlife.

However, some theists believe that as our body is part of what makes us who we are, it must also be part of the Day of Judgement. Indeed, when Jesus was resurrected and appeared to his disciples, he said 'Look at my hands and my feet ... touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones' (Luke 24:39).

### Reasons to Support Belief in Resurrection

Resurrection is taught in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and thus is a central part of the Christian faith. Christians believe that it will happen because of the **authority of the Bible**. The Bible also teaches that God has a personal relationship with humans – one made out of mutual love and respect. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that God would seek to give people eternal life in order for them to maintain relationships with him.

In addition, Jewish and Christian teachings on evil and suffering make sense only if there is a God who is good. Good will be rewarded for their efforts on earth and the bad will be punished for their suffering of others. If there is no purpose in suffering (i.e. if accepting suffering and death as a result of obedience to God is not rewarded), then this may suggest a God who does not care about his people and who causes pain and torment for no particular reason.

### Parapsychology – the study of the spiritual realm

Belief in life after death can be supported by evidence of communication with those who have died. The spiritualist movement claims that people can communicate with those who have passed into the afterlife through seances led by mediums.

However, the credibility of the spiritualist movement has been damaged by hoaxes and fraud. People claim to communicate with people's loved ones in order to make money. Most religious people believe that people cannot communicate with the dead, as such activity is forbidden in the Bible. Parapsychology has had psychological effects on vulnerable people who have lost relatives. Spiritualism is not a part of the modern world. John Hick, although sceptical of spiritualism, wrote:

*'The best cases ... are impressive and puzzling and taken at face value are indicative of genuine communication after death.'* (John Hick)

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## Near-death Experiences

It is possible that evidence of near-death experiences (NDEs) could support belief in life after death. NDEs occur when a person 'dies' for a short while (perhaps during an operation) and is then medically resuscitated. There is a commonality of such experiences worldwide. For example, nearly all NDEs involve seeming to leave the physical body before travelling towards a dead relative or religious figure. Swinburne argues that we should accept the evidence of an afterlife:

*'We ought to take such apparent memories seriously, especially in view of the consistency between them, as evidence that what subjects thought they had experienced, is what they actually experienced.'*  
(Swinburne – The Evolution of the Soul)

## Problems with Resurrection

**Problems with NDEs** – The testimonies of those who have had 'near death experiences' are not proof. All we have is the person's word, and some argue that that is not enough to go on. There are many explanations for such experiences, such as lack of oxygen to the brain.

**Personal identity** – Is the person who is resurrected to a spiritual life the same as the person in the physical world?

### Recap – John Hick – replica theory

To solve the problem that the resurrected person might not be the same person, John Hick used a series of thought experiments. He wanted to prove that the 'I' in this world is the same 'I' in the next world. He asked us to imagine a man called John Smith who lives in America. At a certain point, he disappears and only to reappear at the same moment in India. He states that the John Smith who appears in India has the same memories, fingerprints and emotions. He thinks of himself as being reunited with his friends from America, and they still regard him as John Smith despite his new location. As everyone is concerned, the John Smith who appears in India is the exact same person as the John Smith from America. Now, Hick asks us to imagine that John Smith died and that God recreated him in a spiritual world – surely we should accept that this John Smith has the same **identity** as the John Smith from America.

**Critical analysis of replica theory** – A replica is usually considered to be of less value than the original. Does this mean that the spiritual 'person' is not as valuable as the physical person? Also, if we cannot verify life after death until the end of time, how can belief in life after death be verified? Hick's solution is **verification** – at the end of time we will be able to verify the idea of life after death.

## Materialism, Dualism and Idealism

As we have seen, the idea of the resurrection of the body can link with the ideas of materialism and the replica theory. It could also link with dualism; indeed, Aquinas' ideas are dualist as he believes in both the body and the soul. The idea of resurrection stresses that it is a new body that is created. As Christian teaching on resurrection stresses that it is a new body that is created, it could be supported by dualism's notion that the mind is separate from the body. Whether or not the new 'spiritual body' shares the same physical characteristics is not important for dualists, as one's identity is contained within the mind rather than the body. However, dualistic ideas sit more easily with the idea of the immortality of the soul.

In the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), the body is important, but the soul is more so. However, the soul is the non-contingent aspect of a person which gives them life and is immortal. As we have seen, Plato believed that the soul belongs to a higher realm, where eternal truths such as the forms of things live forever. The soul seeks to be free from the physical world to join this higher realm of forms. The body belongs to the physical world and, as all physical things, will eventually decay.

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## Immortality of the soul

Plato's two arguments for dualism:

### 1. *Meno*

Plato uses Socrates as a character. Socrates gets his slave boy to do some sums and to reach conclusions which the boy could not have learnt in this life. The boy finds the correct answer through the sums, but the question is, *how does he know that he is correct?* Plato concludes that the geometrical knowledge must have come from the soul when it descended from the eternally real world to join his body to make him a human. Our soul forgets its heavenly knowledge in its descent to earth and education enables it to remember. Plato calls this idea the 'doctrine of recollection'.

### 2. *Phaedo*

This argument is based on Plato's concept that 'like gives rise to like'. As bodies are material, it is impossible that the body could be made out of the mind or that the mind could be made out of the body. The body is material, and the soul is invisible and immaterial. It is in the material world that death occurs, and thus the soul must be eternal and must have existed before birth and after the death of the body.

Plato's ideas have been discredited by philosophy. Empirical investigation has shown that the body and the mind were incorrect – psychology has given us much information about the mind, but it does not work in the way in which Plato suggested. For example, ideas and thoughts are now shown to be caused by chemical reactions in the brain, showing that the mind is material.

As we have seen, René Descartes was a dualist who believed that the soul is the true self, the core of human identity which provides the only meaningful way of understanding an individual. **Descartes is very important to the idea of the immortality of the soul and should be mentioned in an answer on this section.**

## Where does the soul go when the physical body dies?

This question has puzzled theologians and scholars for centuries. Catholicism states that if a person is forgiven for forgiveness, then they will go to heaven. Without this forgiveness, they will end up in hell (for sinners) or purgatory (a place where minor sins can be purified).

However, these ideas have been challenged. John Hick believes the idea of hell to be 'disturbing beyond words; and the thought of such torment being deliberately inflicted on innocent people is totally incompatible with the idea of God as infinite love.' There are also problems with the idea of heaven. The monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism, describe heaven as a place of reward. However, can humans have a worthwhile existence without any challenge or purpose? The highest joy in heaven is the beatific vision (the vision of God), which gives the highest joy and is something to look at but rather something which dwells 'within the very essence of our soul'.

## Immanuel Kant and the immortality of the soul

Kant argued that all humans strive to reach the *summum bonum*, the greatest good. Our reason tells us that we ought to be good but also that being good should be rewarded by happiness. As goodness is not rewarded by happiness in this life, the soul must be immortal and there must be a God and an afterlife where good moral actions are rewarded. ('The summum bonum is only possible on the presupposition of the immortality of the soul').

### Exam prep 3:

Examine religious ideas of continued personal existence after death.

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## Problems with the idea of the immortality of the soul

How could a soul relate to its surroundings and to other souls without a physical body? If we are to be truly human in a non-physical afterlife? We would not have any physical experiences, will we be truly human in a non-physical afterlife? We would not have any physical experiences, and we would not be able to develop to our full potential.

*'Instead of a world that is given to us and to which we must adapt ourselves, we must create a world for ourselves by our own minds and expressing our own desires. Could such a world continue to exist after death? Could it have begun on earth?' (John Hick)*

### Exam prep 4:

'It is not possible to believe in continued personal existence after death.' Evaluate this claim.

## Conclusions – which idea of life after death is the most convincing?

To a large extent, a person's beliefs about life after death will depend upon the culture they are brought up in. A person who is brought up in India in a Hindu household is likely to believe in reincarnation. A person who is brought up in a Christian household is likely to believe in heaven and hell. It seems to be one particular idea which is more convincing than the others, and that is the idea of heaven and hell. The theories of reincarnation and purgatory are less convincing.

Wittgenstein argued that if we take religious ideas of the afterlife to be ideas that are not true, then they lose their religious significance. To attempt to prove such ideas is to misuse religious language.

*Suppose, for instance, we knew people who foresaw the future: made forecasts for the future. They described some sort of Judgement Day. Queerly enough, even if there were no other evidence, their forecasts would be more convincing than I have described ... belief in this happening would not be a religious belief.*

An anti-realist might see life after death as a myth or a symbol. They might believe in the happiness of someone in this life who is unselfish and generous. Similarly, they might believe in the misery of someone in this life who is selfish. Talk of the 'Last Judgement' may be a symbol of the motivation for what we do. Some liberal Christians and Jews have adopted this symbol. They may feel that belief in a literal life after death is no longer possible in a modern world. They may also feel that belief in a real life after death is a confusion of the true religious message with a myth. A more honest life in the here and now. Their ideas may make us think of Bultmann, who 'demythologised' religious ideas in order to maintain the relevance of religion to modern people.

However, many religious people do believe in an actual life after death, and it is this belief that gives them comfort when they lose a loved one or face death themselves. Belief in an afterlife is a matter of faith, not fact. Modern people who require empirical evidence, but a religious person may state that belief in an afterlife is a matter of faith, not fact.

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# ANSWERS TO EXAM PREP QUESTIONS

## RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

**Exam prep 1:** Examine non-cognitive approaches to religious language.

**Why do some believers prefer a non-cognitive approach to religious language?**

- The Bible is open to interpretation, giving mythological or symbolic truths rather than literal ones.
- God is transcendent and, therefore, unknowable. Therefore, it is not possible to speak of God in literal terms.
- Human language cannot adequately describe a perfect God who is beyond our understanding.
- God is 'wholly other' and, therefore, cannot be understood or described through human language.

**Scholars who advocate a non-cognitive approach to religious language**

- R M Hare – religious language is a 'blik'. It cannot be falsified or verified but is never false for believers' lives.
- Paul Tillich – religious language is symbolic. Words such as 'powerful' and 'loving' will only be meaningful if they should be interpreted symbolically and are powerful as they 'unlock elements and dimensions of our emotional and spiritual understanding of God, who is 'Being Itself.'
- Braithwaite – religious statements are moral statements which inform us about how we should live.

**Exam prep 2:** Examine how the meaningfulness of religious language has been challenged.

**The verification principle**

- Only synthetic and analytic propositions are capable of being verified. As religious statements are neither synthetic nor provable through sense experience, they are, therefore, meaningless.
- A. J Ayer – the verification principle states that a statement is only meaningful if we can have sense data which it can be proven to be true or false. As no sense data is available to either prove or disprove statements about God, such statements have no meaning.
- Strong and weak verification – Ayer modified the verification principle to state that a statement is meaningful if we understand how it could be proven even if we can't check the veracity of the statement through sense experience today. Religious statements cannot be weakly verified either and so remain meaningless.

**The falsification principle**

- Put forward by Anthony Flew.
- As believers don't allow any evidence to count against their statements about God, their statements are unfalsifiable and therefore meaningless.
- For example, believers continue to say that 'God is loving' despite evidence of suffering in the world. Therefore, the claim 'God is loving' is void of meaning.
- For the statement 'God exists' to be meaningful, believers must be open to the possibility of God not existing. The fact that they aren't open to that possibility makes their claims about God meaningless.

**Exam prep 3:**

1. Examine the idea of religious language as symbolic, with reference to Tillich.

**Symbols point towards 'Being Itself'**

- Religious language as symbolic is a non-cognitive approach to religious language.
- It is impossible to fully understand God as he is transcendent.
- The only literal thing we can say about God is that he is 'Being Itself.' Every other word we use to describe God is symbolic.
- Symbols are different from signs as they 'participate in that to which they point to'. The word 'loving' participates in 'Being Itself' and allows us to have an emotional understanding of God.

**Ultimate concern**

- Religious faith is a state of being 'ultimately concerned with the ultimate'.
- This ultimate concern can be expressed only through symbols which point beyond themselves to the ultimate.

2. Examine the idea of religious language as analogical, with reference to Aquinas.

**Religious language as analogical**

- Language about God is not univocal or equivocal but analogical.
- A non-cognitive approach – when we speak of God we aren't speaking literally as God is impossible to comprehend.
- However, there is a link between God and humans as God made us. Therefore, we can use words to describe humans, such as 'good', and apply them to God analogically.

**Attribution and proportionality**

- Analogy of attribution – human good qualities are a reflection of God's perfect goodness. If we see goodness in a human, we can go some way to understanding perfect goodness.
- Analogy of proportionality – The amount of a quality a thing possesses is proportional to its nature. If God is perfect, he has perfect amounts of qualities such as love, goodness and power.

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Exam prep 4:

1. Examine religious language as an expression of a ‘blik’.

Religious language as non-cognitive

- Religious language is non-cognitive.
- Religious statements are not factual claims and so cannot be verified or falsified.

Blik

- Religious statements are meaningful as they are ‘bliks’.
- ‘Bliks’ are statements that are not verifiable or falsifiable but are nevertheless the way believers see the world and the way in which they live their lives.
- The example of the university student.

2. Examine the idea of eschatological verification.

- The idea of eschatological verification is used to criticise the verification principle.
- It was put forward by John Hick to argue that a statement about belief which is not meaningless as it may be verified after we die.
- When we die, we will know whether or not there is a God and an afterlife and so religious statements.
- This means that religious statements are verifiable in principle and so can be verified in principle. Even though we cannot at present verify religious statements which they can be verified in the afterlife, and, therefore, they are meaningful.
- Hick’s point is illustrated in his parable of the celestial city.

3. ‘The via negativa shows that religious language can be meaningful.’ Evaluate this claim.

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
We can know things that God is <i>not</i> . For example, ‘God is not physical.’ Therefore, we can make meaningful statements about God.	Thompson – we cannot understand in negative terms.
Through the principle of negation, we can use the things we know about God is <i>not</i> to come to an understanding of what he is like.	Believers don’t try to describe him in positive terms.
The via negativa allows us to articulate an understanding of God while maintaining his mystery and the idea that he is essentially unknowable.	Looking only at what God is not tells us nothing about him.

4. ‘The strengths of an analogical view of religious language outweigh the weaknesses.’ Evaluate this claim.

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
Experiences of God are almost impossible to put into words. However, using the words we already understand <i>analogically</i> gives us some understanding of God and allows us to speak meaningfully about him.	Aquinas’s idea focuses on using words to describe God, such as ‘good’ and ‘love’, which is meaningless, and, therefore, does not work.
Using religious language analogically enables believers to articulate their faith in, and ideas about, God while maintaining God’s mystery.	We are incapable of understanding God in perfect form. Therefore, statements about God remain meaningless.
Aquinas’s idea that God has human qualities but in perfect amounts is straightforward and easy to understand.	Although the use of analogy is helpful for religious believers, to non-believers it is meaningless. The idea of God, along with his perfect qualities, is not understandable.

5. ‘The verification principle means that all religious claims are meaningless.’ Evaluate this claim.

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
The verification principle appeals to logic and common sense. As we understand only that which we experience, we cannot meaningfully talk about things beyond our experience.	R M Hare – religious statements are not verifiable but still have meaning for believers who live their lives by them.
Religious statements are neither analytic nor synthetic propositions and, therefore, cannot be verified or hold meaning.	Hick – eschatological statements are verifiable in principle according to Ayer’s modification.
Ayer’s modification of the verification principle to allow statements to be weakly verified allows scientific and historical statements to be meaningful but shows that religious claims are not even verifiable in principle and so cannot have any meaning.	Wittgenstein – religious statements are meaningful for those who take part in the religious community, and, therefore, they are meaningful.

# MIRACLES

## Exam prep 1:

1. Examine realist and anti-realist views on miracles.

### Realist view on miracles

- Miracles happen when God chooses to intervene in the world by breaking the laws of nature.
- God causes miracles to happen, and they reveal something profound about God (e.g. if God break the laws of nature, he is benevolent and wants to help us by performing miracles with us and so chooses to interact with the world to reveal himself to us, etc.)

### Anti-realist view on miracles

- Miracles may be natural events which are interpreted religiously.
- Miracles are open to interpretation – one person may interpret an event as an miracle and see it as a miraculous event of religious significance.
- Even if the miracles recorded in the Bible were not caused directly by God, they still tell us something about God and something about life in general.

2. Examine definitions of miracles as violations of natural law and natural events.

### Violations of natural law

- Miracles break the laws of nature (for example, Jesus walking on water, Jesus bringing the dead back to life, etc.)
- As only God is powerful enough to break the laws of nature, miracles provide evidence of God's existence.
- God reveals himself to us by breaking the laws of nature to help us.
- David Hume defined miracles as events which break the laws of nature (although he thought they never happen).

### Events of religious significance

- Holland defined miracles as events of religious significance.
- These events of religious significance can be signs, amazing coincidences or natural events.
- Miracles defined in this way are open to interpretation. One person may see a miracle as a work of God.

## Exam prep 2:

1. Examine the key ideas of Hume on miracles.

- Hume defined miracles as events which break the laws of nature.
- He then went on to say that it is very unlikely that the laws of nature have ever been broken and probably do not happen.
- Hume argued that 'a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence.' We have evidence that the laws of nature work consistently every day of our lives. Accounts of miracles do not give us any evidence of a different nature, such as gravity. There is, therefore, insufficient evidence to reject any claim that a miracle has occurred.
- Human testimony on miracles is unreliable, according to Hume. Those who argue for miracles are surely either lying or mistaken when we consider how much evidence we have that the laws of nature work. Believers also have a vested interest in making us believe that miracles have occurred as they are exaggerating or lying about miracles.
- For Hume, the miracles of different religious traditions cancel each other out – they are not a foundation for belief in *their* God.

2. Examine the key ideas of Wiles on miracles.

- Wiles was a religious believer who rejected miracles.
- Creation is an ongoing activity of God – it makes no sense to speak of God breaking the laws of nature.
- The God of Christianity would not perform miracles as he would not help some people who do not perform pointless miracles.
- Miracles don't happen as God does not intervene in the world at random. They are what God is like, but they did not actually happen.

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3. 'The objection to miracles from Wiles is more damaging to miracles than that of David Hume.'

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
Wiles's criticisms are damaging as he himself is a religious believer.	David Hume is quite convincing. We don't have sufficient evidence for believing that God breaks the laws of nature.
Wiles successfully points out that a God who helps some and not others is not fair or just. Therefore, miracles should be rejected as a God who performed miracles would not be worthy of worship.	It does seem reasonable to believe that people are likely to be deceived by miracles as it backs up ancient traditions.
Wiles points out that believers should not believe that God performs pointless miracles while letting awful things such as the Holocaust take place. It is much better to believe that God does not intervene in the world at all.	Hume does make a good point. If their God/ideas are correct, then why do we have tradition. Logic tells us that we should well reject all miracles.

Exam prep 3:

1. 'A person who does not believe in miracles cannot be religious.' Evaluate this claim.

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
The Bible is a source of authority for Christians. As miracles are in the Bible, Christians should believe in them.	Christians who support the statement think that it is not necessary to believe in miracles. The accounts of miracles are often contradictory and the nature of God and life.
Miracles show the omnipotence and benevolence of Jesus as the Son of God. Christians should, therefore, believe that they are real.	Wiles argues that religious beliefs are based on faith as God would not help someone who does not believe in him.
Faith is about believing in something despite a lack of evidence. Believing that God/Jesus performed miracles is an important part of that faith.	It is still possible to believe in God without believing in miracles. Christians may reject miracles but still believe in the teachings and believe in God.

2. 'Miracles support belief in God.' Evaluate this claim.

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
As only God is capable of breaking the laws of nature, miracles are proof that God exists.	Wiles – a God who performs miracles is not worthy of worship as he is not fair. It is better to reject miracles as they are not fair and treats everyone differently.
Miracles reveal God's omnipotence (he has the power to break that laws of nature) and benevolence (he loves us and so wants to interact with us and help us by performing miracles).	There is more evidence against miracles than for them and so they cannot be used as proof of God's existence.
If God does exist, then we would expect him to reveal himself to us through interacting with the world to perform miracles.	In the modern world, belief in miracles seem outdated and unscientific. Christians should use other ways to support their faith.

SELF, DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

Exam prep 1: Examine Descartes’ argument for the existence of the soul.

- The body and the mind/soul are different. The body is physical, but the mind/soul is not. The mind/soul experiences emotions and gives us our identity. We know that the soul exists as we exist as thinkers.
- The mind/soul is different from the physical brain. It is not part of the physical world.
- The body and the mind/soul interact with each other but are not the same thing. The mind/soul can exist without the body, but the body cannot exist without the soul.
- The mind/soul survives the body and maintains our identity after death. It returns to the body.
- The mind/soul cannot be destroyed in the same way as bodies can. It is immortal.

Exam prep 2: ‘There is no such thing as the soul.’ Evaluate this claim.

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
Ryle – the materialist view is that the body and the mind are one and the same thing. Our mind is simply our brain, and when we die, no part of us lives on. Believing in the soul is a ‘category mistake.’	Descartes – the soul is different from the body and cannot be destroyed (it is immortal). It is a soul as it is the source of our thoughts and feelings. ‘I think, therefore I am.’
Modern science reveals that the mind is actually just the brain. Everything about us is physical, including the mind. If the mind were not physical, it would not be able to affect the physical world, and yet our thoughts and ideas clearly do affect the world. If the mind is just the brain, then it too will die and decay – there is no part of us to live on after death.	Plato – the body and the mind are different. The body is physical. The mind/soul is not physical. The mind/soul is not subject to death but is immortal.
Surely our physical bodies make up a huge part of our identities. Can we really be ‘us’ without our physical bodies? How would we recognise loved ones in the afterlife without bodies? Where do all of these non-physical souls live after death? The idea of the soul living on after death makes no sense and raises more questions than it answers.	Kant – human beings strive for the <i>summum bonum</i> . Reason and morality must be rewarded. As a result of this, after life, there must be a non-physical realm where the soul lives and is rewarded.

Exam prep 3: Examine religious ideas of continued personal existence after death.

- The Bible teaches that Jesus will return on the Day of Judgement to judge the living and the dead. Those who are raised from the ground, and all will be sent to either heaven or hell.
- Therefore, some Christians believe that the physical body continues somehow in the afterlife. The body is resurrected in the same way as Jesus was.
- However, St Paul wrote that the ‘body’ which Jesus raises and judges will be a spiritual body. This suggests that it is the soul which lives on after death and is sent to either heaven or hell.
- Aquinas supported the idea of the soul surviving death and being sent to either heaven or hell.

Exam prep 4: ‘It is not possible to believe in continued personal existence after death.’ Evaluate this claim.

Reasons to support the statement	Reasons to oppose the statement
Materialists, such as Ryle, argue that there isn’t a non-physical mind/soul. The ‘mind’ is simply our brain, and this will die and decay with our bodies. Believing in a soul is a category mistake as we have no identity beyond our physical bodies, and, therefore, nothing of us will continue to exist after death.	The Bible states that Jesus will return on the Day of Judgement to judge the living and the dead. Those who are raised from the ground, and all will be sent to either heaven or hell. This is a source of authority and, therefore, good evidence for the existence of the soul after death.
The idea of a bodily resurrection no longer makes sense as our scientific knowledge reveals that bodies decay and so cannot be raised from the dead. The potential solution that we have ‘spiritual bodies’ or a soul which survives death also does not work as the idea that we can have an existence and identity without our bodies is wrong.	Dualists Plato and Descartes argue that the non-physical mind/soul is not subject to death. It is physical and eternal. It will live on after death.
Anti-realists might argue that the ideas of life after death are simply symbolic and cannot be believed in the modern scientific world. The message of the myth of life after death is to live a good life and help others and should not be taken literally.	Kant argues that human beings strive for the <i>summum bonum</i> . Reason and morality must be rewarded, and yet there is no reward in this life. Therefore, there must be a non-physical realm where the soul lives and is rewarded.

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