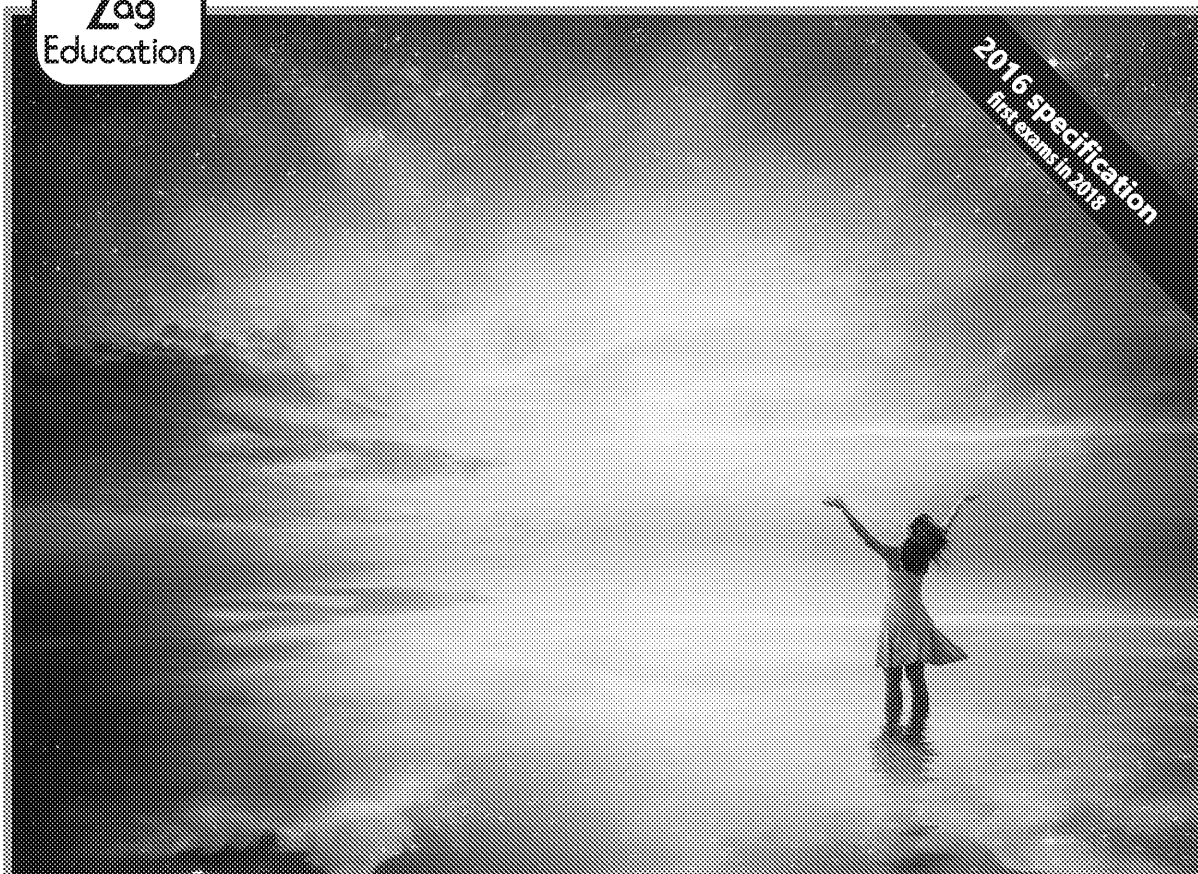




Topic on a Page for A Level Year 2 OCR

Component 1A: Philosophy of Religion

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Teacher's Introduction

This resource covers the A Level Year 2 OCR Religious Studies specification for Component 1A: Philosophy of Religion, and includes the following content:

1. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Nature or Attributes of God
2. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Conflicts between Attributes of God
3. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic: The Apophatic Way and the Cataphatic Way
4. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic: Religious Language as Symbol
5. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives: Logical Positivism and Language Games
6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives: The Falsification Symposium

Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

The resource is split into five sections as follows:

1. **A4 teacher information pages.**
2. **Six A3 revision posters**, between them covering the four subtopics. These are labelled: **1** to **6**. These posters are intended as a summary of all topic material, focusing on the main points rather than the detail, so that all important areas are covered without going into too much depth.
3. **Six A3 subtopic sheets with activities.** Each of these sheets covers one subtopic and provides write-on activities for students to complete. Answers can generally be found in the A3 revision posters themselves, but are also provided in a separate answer document (see section 5). These are labelled with numbers inside white circles: **6**.

Exam-style questions, modelled on those found in the AS / A Level exam, are marked by a pencil icon: 
4. **18 A4 subtopic revision posters.** These provide answers for the main activities given in the A3 subtopic activity sheets. As revision posters, these can be used as a summary for each area, and have enough space for teacher or student annotation. These are labelled with numbers inside black circles: **18**.
5. **A4 answer sheets.** These pages provide more detailed answers to the questions on the A3 subtopic activity sheets; in particular, the long-answer questions. Student-friendly, OCR-style mark schemes are also provided for the exam-style questions.

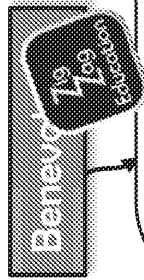
All posters can be displayed on classroom walls, or given to students to learn in lessons or at home.

As a whole, the resource can be used to help students to consolidate knowledge at the end of a topic/subtopic, or to revise before a test or an exam. Different styles and layouts are used to make the information interesting and to help the students engage with the information in a productive way.

January 2021

4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Nature of God

When discussing the nature of God, the starting point for theists is often the **classical or traditional** view of God. This holds that God is **omnipotent, omniscient, transcendent, benevolent and eternal**.



Benevolence (or **omnibenevolence**) is the view that God is **all-loving**. This attribute in particular is important for Christians as it supports the belief that God is personally invested in the lives of human beings.

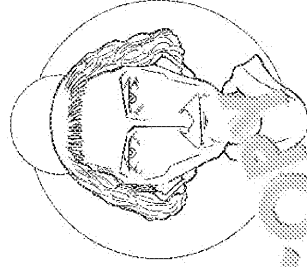
However, benevolence also comes into conflict with other attributes. Most notably, it is part of the **inconsistent triad** alongside omnipotence, which leads to the **problem of evil**.

Furthermore, benevolence is thought to support other beliefs about God being **just**. This leads to issues around omniscience and free will. For example, was concerned with how God could meaningfully judge human actions if he already knew the outcome of our free will? Such knowledge would make human free will a moot point.

God is traditionally thought to mean that God has always existed.

However, God's **eternality** means that God has always existed.

Human beings by their nature are mortal. Nevertheless, God's eternal existence means that there are no conflicts between other attributes of God.



Anselm

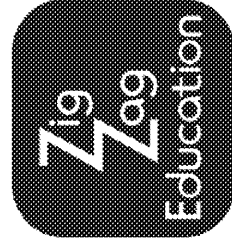
One key issue is God's relationship with the world.

For thinkers like Anselm, God is transcendent, meaning he is not affected by the world and is eternal.

This view of God is contrasted with the view of God as immanent. However, some argue that this is an oversimplification of the human condition.

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Natural

There have been many solutions proposed to the omnipotence paradox. Some argue that framing the problem in the right way leads to its dissolution, while others hold that the term 'omnipotence' itself should be replaced by another.

Descartes, for example, simply stated that it is **no paradox** for God to be omnipotent. On the other hand, Aquinas, on the other hand, argued that omnipotence means God can perform any logically possible action. Creating a stone too big for an omnipotent being to lift, he held, resulted in a **logical contradiction**, so under his definition the paradox is resolved.

However, critics pointed out that it is logically possible for human beings to create a stone too heavy for them to lift. Similarly, it may not be logically impossible for God to restrict or self-limit his own power. Aquinas here may not be right.

The paradox of omnipotence leads to questions about whether God is essentially or **accidentally** omnipotent. If the former, rather than the latter, then God cannot possibly self-limit his own power.

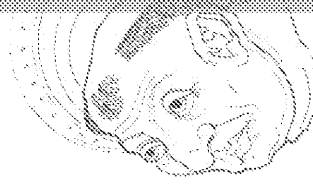
William Lane Craig, for example, argues that omnipotence means God can perform any action **consistent** with his nature. If God is essentially omnipotent, then God would never act to self-limit his power.

Richard Swinburne, however, argues that the issue is with believing God has **omnipotent essential omnipotence**. God cannot have changed the past to restrict his own omnipotence; this is logically incoherent. But there is no contradiction in holding that a future event could restrict the power of an omnipotent being. God's omnipotence is to some degree accidental.

Attempting to define what 'omnipotence' means, this problem is exposed. This asks whether God can create a stone, he is not all-powerful or powerful.

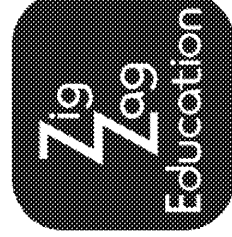
This paradox reveals a key issue: power. If an omnipotent being is omnipotent, but if they can't create a stone, they are not all-powerful.

The Omnipotence Paradox



Aquinas

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Nature of God

Omniscience is the view that God possesses all possible knowledge. If God is explanatory, there are no mysteries. Does omniscience mean that God is possible to know? Or does it mean that there are further difficulties? We possess **propositional** knowledge (the right things to do). It can also be asked how God's knowledge is very different from what we observe around us.

Omniscience

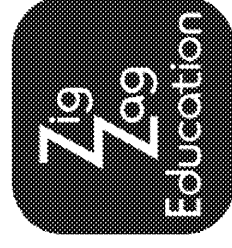
One important issue concerns how God's omniscience interacts with human free will. If God possesses all possible knowledge, this would include knowledge of all human actions, including those caused by human actions. Yet this implies also that all human actions are predetermined by God's knowledge and not determined by free choices.

This is problematic as theists often uphold the view that human beings possess **libertarian** free will: the idea that people have the power to make free choices and are not unduly constrained by external factors.

However, theists don't want to arbitrarily restrict or limit God's knowledge. Such a proposal would result in God ceasing to be omniscient. Instead, many theologians have held that understanding God's **eternity, transcendence and relationship to time** holds the key to reconciling this conflict.

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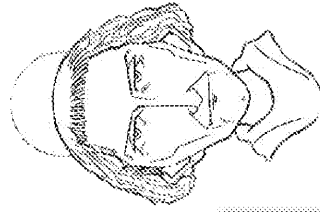
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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Conflicts between

Like Boethius' presentism, Anselm's four-dimensionalism is proposed to solve the conflict between free will and omniscience. Since God is not contained within time, but is outside it, God's omniscience does not entail foreknowledge of future events. It imposes only **conditional necessity** upon creation.

What appears to be a conflict between finisic, finite and free will is due to the limitations of the finite human mind. It is only the physical and temporal restrictions of free will in the natural world.



Anselm

However, critics of Boethius and Anselm have questioned whether their proposals truly resolve the conflict. Moreover, many have asked whether **timelessness** itself is a coherent notion when it comes to omniscience.

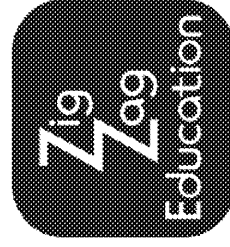
For instance, if God truly does know everything, shouldn't that simply involve God knowing the outcome of past and future events? Under Anselm's interpretation, God appears to be more of a **passive observer** than an active participant in the universe.

There are difficult implications to this. Henry VIII notes that if Anselm is correct, all events occur at the same time, at the beginning of the universe!

While it can be argued that pointing to human imagination, it is difficult to reconcile with the very interventionist, personhood of God. Out, God is not a mere observer but

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Conflicts between

Divine Self-limitation

Divine self-limitation is perceived by Swinburne to address numerous conflicts between divine attributes and the problem of omnipotence to the issue of omnipotence. However, this limitation is a controversial issue. It suggests that God's omniscience is some way not **essential** and is instead **accidental**. Many theists would reject this view.

It can be argued that Swinburne has just devised a God of his choosing and failed to properly reconcile the conflicts between the attributes of the God of **classical theism**.

Other thinkers also hold that Swinburne's beliefs about immutability are mistaken. Divine love is not the same as human love. God can be benevolent, just and personally invested in humanity without having to self-limit or change. Swinburne's compromises are just a failure of imagination.

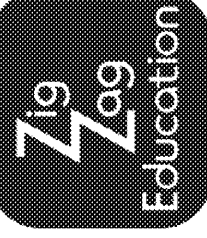
Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy* writes extensively about how omnipotence and immutability will conflict. He argued the solution lay in demonstrating God's timelessness and transcendence.

The key aspect of his proposals was that since God is outside grasps all events in an **atemporal present**. All things occur simultaneously from God's perspective.

This means God's knowledge is never directed towards a past or future. Boethius' **presentism** aims to show that although God is aware of all things that occur, this does not necessitate a change in events that are in the future for human beings.

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Conflicts between

Swinburne avoids the conflict between omniscience and free will by claiming also that God, being contained within time, does not possess foreknowledge of future events that concern the choices of free will.

However, this doesn't affect God's omniscience. God could possess such foreknowledge but **self-limit** his omniscience upon the creation of beings with free will.

Swinburne argues that it is logically impossible for **libertarian** free will to coexist alongside divine foreknowledge. The simplest solution is to reject God's immutability and accept God can change his powers and knowledge where necessary and appropriate.



Swinburne

One advantage to Swinburne's view is that God experiences his world are consistent with his freedom. Rejecting immutability also poses no conflict about how God's transcendence of time allows for a personal relationship with humans. Swinburne's view also potentially resolves the conflict between free will. Humans are free simply because God is not bound by time, being a more convoluted explanation.

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The key advantage is that once we have a language created by human language, concepts and ideas when talking about God. For example, stating 'God's power has 19¹⁵⁴ education' may potentially express the nature of his omnipotence better than analogies or comparisons to material things.

The Apophotic Way

Maimonides' mention is that this process will eventually lead an individual to a concrete notion of what a ship is. Moreover, this process can apply to the being of God himself. By defining what God is not, one can eventually arrive at a deeper comprehension of what God truly is.

One aspect under Brian's elimination are that upon Neil's usefulness can undoubtedly on the way to the

5. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic: The Apophatic Way

William Blackstone argues that **analogical language** is less meaningful than Aquinas believes. Analogical statements contain terms that will have to be defined through **univocal language** in order to be comprehensible. Thus, there is still a risk of anthropomorphism.

Analogies of proportionality also assume some similarity between human beings and God. However, it may be that this assumption is unwarranted.

Vincent Brümmer notes that the inaccessibility of God means it is unclear whether comparisons with human beings are valid. Moreover, a strong focus on **proportionality** ends up relying on negative language more than positive analogy does, questioning the usefulness of the via positiva.



Aquinas

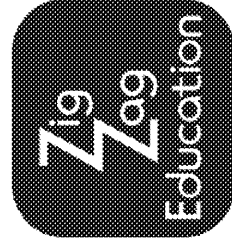
The Cataphatic Way

Aquinas argued that the solution to difficulties facing the via positiva was to talk about God.

He contended that analogies struck an important balance between univocal and equivocal comparisons between God and humanity, while acknowledging the limitations of human language. Aquinas also proposed two ways in which such analogical talk of God was possible: **analogy of attribution**. This holds that it is possible to state something about a creature by referring to God.

The second is through **analogy of proportionality**. This holds that it is possible to draw conclusions about higher beings who possess perfections in a way that is proportionally greater than lesser beings who possess perfections in a way that is proportionally lesser.

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5. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic: The Apophatic View

A key distinction in the use of language is between **cognitive** and **non-cognitive propositions**.

Cognitive propositions are those which can effectively be evaluated as true or false. They invite literal interpretation and aim to state objective facts about the world.

Non-cognitive propositions cannot be effectively evaluated as true or false. Their meaning is subjective and is dependent on the utterer's or hearer's beliefs.

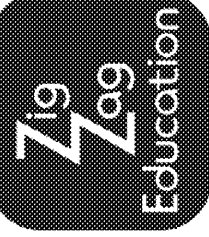
Cognitive and Non-cognitive Propositions

What is Religious Language?

Sometimes religious language seems to require a special interpretation, such as the statement 'God created the world'. However, at other times it is interpreted literally. For example, for statements such as 'God is love'.

A problem with religious language is separating out its different uses and purposes. For it often does not just give passive descriptions of God and the world, but is actively used in a vast array of different contexts, from religious rites such as marriage and communion to individual personal prayer.

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5. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic: Religious Language

Symbolic language is very different from straightforward positive or negative language. It primarily describes God through the use of **representations** or images that stand in for a concept and point towards a deeper meaning.

Symbols therefore should not be equated to signs, which are simple representations of other concepts. Rather, symbols are used to evoke a greater meaningful response from the person using them and often encourage participation.

A common example of a symbol is a national flag. On the surface, it represents a country, but for a country's inhabitants, it generally carries a greater emotional significance, pointing towards important values, feelings and history.

Symbolic language, by its nature, is typically taken to be **non-cognitive**. It is not used to convey straightforward factual information, but rather the subjective beliefs, wishes and emotions of those participating in its use.

One perceivable difficulty with symbolic language is that it can become **trivialised** and their meaning lost.

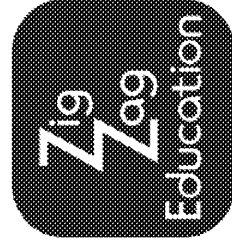
A clear example is the **swastika**, which was used by the Nazi Party as a symbol of 'Aryan' supremacy.

Moreover, if symbols arise from particular cultural contexts, there are difficult questions about their relevance in other contexts.

Symbols may also become outdated or irrelevant to a particular culture and the world. For instance, Greek symbols like the olive branch and the olive branch they aren't directly relevant to people today.

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5. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic: Religious Language

John Hick criticises Tillich's proposals about symbolic language for being overly **subjective**. He argues that unless there is specific **factur** content in the use of a symbol, it is impossible to tell whether individuals are having deeper meaning from participating, or simply having a **magical** emotional response.

However, if symbols are **inert**, this is limiting towards specific factur content, they cease to be as **flexible** in the manner Tillich envisions. It becomes necessary to bring in **cognitive** statements about God to ground the use of symbolic language.

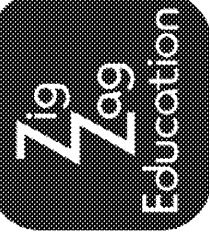
For Hick, this indicates that symbolic language alone cannot capture religious discourse. While symbols are important, the complex array of claims religion makes needs grounding through use of the **cataphatic** or **apophatic** statements.

Symbols and Religious

Discourse

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5. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic: Religious Language

Importantly, Tillich argues that only **symbolic language** can capture the philosophical insights offered by Christian theology. Conversely, employing literal, positive statements about God only leads to **anthropomorphic, contradictory** interpretations of his being and fails to address the key existential questions at the heart of human life and living.

Symbols are much more flexible. They allow human beings to develop deeper insights into the world that aren't limited by the constraints of language. They open up the human psyche to different levels of reality that not only enhance our experience and point towards deeper, richer meanings within religious concepts and phenomena.

Thus, symbols avoid the constraints of both the via negativa and the via positiva. One key example in Christianity is the cross. Most Christians would hold that the cross represents a vast set of thoughts, feelings and ideas that cannot be captured by conventional discourse. This depth of meaning is not possible if one takes a cognitive approach to religious language.

Paul Tillich

Symbols are naturally rife throughout the Christian religion. However, Tillich goes a step further and holds that all religious claims are symbolic in nature. Even statements such as 'God created the world' are not intended to be taken literally.

However, symbols are also not just blindly created to fulfil our basic needs. They require continued human participation in which they naturally occupy a role within the **cultural context** of the community. The meaning of symbols is shaped gradually over time through this participation until it achieves the richness and depth suitable for religious reflection.

Moreover, the meaning of symbols can dynamically change over time as new events, ideas and concepts inform how human beings engage with them. Symbols are never just static representations.

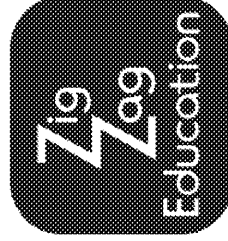
While symbols occupy a central role in Christianity, there is still some doubt about whether theists talk about God.

One key issue is that many religious statements are **truth-evaluable** statements, which means that it comes to straightforwardly.

In both religious and secular contexts, their symbolic meaning is often lost. For critics of Tillich, the reflection on symbolic language in Christianity which are more

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6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives: Logical Positivism

The logical positivists adopted Hume's distinction, holding that cognitive statements had to be either **synthetically** or **analytically** truth-evaluable.

This led to the development of the **verification principle**, which was stated that any statement is meaningful only if it can be **verified** through empirical evidence or through it being analytic.

Therefore, a statement could be confirmed or verified through some form of **sensory experience** (and so be **synthetic, a posteriori**), or be **tautologically** true due to the meanings of the terms involved (**analytic, a priori**), then the logical positivists held it to be meaningless.

This principle excluded a large number of statements from non-scientific fields, including those that were religious in nature, which were not verifiable through sense experience or analytically true.

The Verification Principle

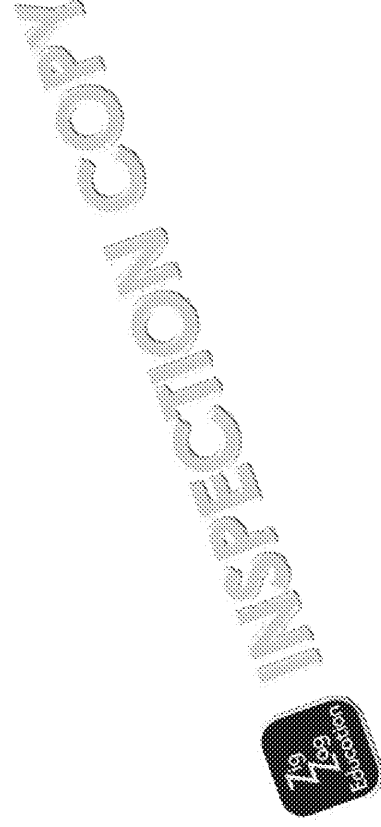
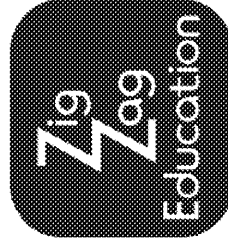
The logical positivists of the twentieth century held that statements could only be meaningful if they could be verified through sense experience or analytically true.

Logical positivism was an important philosophical movement of the early twentieth century.

The former and synthetic statements, necessary for religious language, were excluded by the verification principle.

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6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives: Logical Positivism

Ayer's work is important, as many secular critics have focused on how the strong verification principle makes **historical propositions** meaningless. Geology, evolutionary theory and other fields all study the past, which are not practically verifiable through sense experience.

Moreover, it is difficult to comprehend how one could verify scientific **unobservable entities** such as subatomic particles, which were beyond sense experience. The strong verification principle also struggled with accommodating **laws of nature**. For it would be impossible to verify in practice a claim such as 'all swans are white' without directly observing every swan at once!

Log

A J Ayer

A J Ayer's weak verification principle, despite addressing concerns of strictness, was itself criticised for being too lenient. For it is not clear what **'theoretically'** means when it comes to verification.

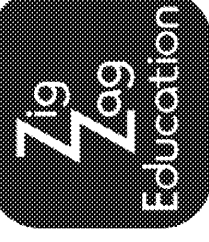
John Hick, for instance, proposed that religious propositions could be **eschatologically verifiable** under **Ayer's principle**, since it is theoretically possible religious claims could be verified in the afterlife if not now.

Vincent Carosso, for example, argues that Ayer mistakes religious statements as being scientific propositions. They are **proclamations of faith** and have different criteria of meaningfulness.

Dorothy Emmet similarly contends **the analogical nature** of religious claims means they are rooted both in faith and observation. They aren't wholly verifiable but can be supported by empirical evidence.

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6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives: Logical Positivism

Out of these different forms of life, Wittgenstein argued that **language games** emerged: a collection of rules, principles and ideas behind how language could be meaningfully used within a particular game.

Each person might have participated in different overlapping language games, depending on what forms of life they were meshed in.

For a person outside a language game, the statements uttered from within may appear meaningless. But that is simply due to those outside the game not knowing or understanding the various rules of the language game.

Wittgenstein illustrates his views using the example of builders. During his work, they employ terms as 'slab', 'pillar', 'beam', which make sense only in the context of those used in the work.

These terms are not meaningless outside this work. Rather, the builders' dialogue can instead be conceived of as a simpler, **primitive language** within a larger overall linguistic framework.

What is a Language Game?

Language Games

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein, in his early work (*Tractatus*), held views similar to the logical positivists. However, in later work (*Philosophical Investigations*), he radically changed his views on language.

He came to believe that the meaningfulness of propositions could not be assessed by specific principles. Instead, the meaning of propositions was determined by the context in which they were used.

Nor, Wittgenstein, was the meaning of language static. It changed over time and was embedded in certain **Lebensform** (form of life).

These forms of life were the culture or community of people who possess similar interests or ways of life. Forms of life can be found equally in large and small groups, whether it be a single parish, a religious community or an entire religion.

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6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives: The Falsification

Mitchell attempts to argue through his counter-parable that one can maintain a **reasonable faith** in God. The theist acknowledges the evidence against their proposition, but the nature of faith means they can't simply reject their beliefs. There is no sign of this conflicting evidence.

However, Mitchell also notes that faith should not be so extreme as to reject all conflicting evidence. There is a middle reasonable ground between a complete lack of conviction in one's beliefs and an insane adherence to them despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

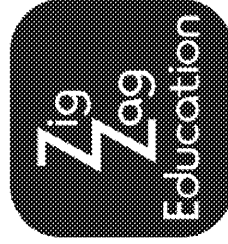
Basil Mitchell

Basil Mitchell goes on to argue that resistance fighting is a way of life in the midst of war.

This stranger comes to the way that they are, and resistance fighting is a way of life.

Thus, even when the stranger is the fighter, the stranger maintains the fighter's main.

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6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives: The Falsification

Flew argued that meaningful propositions, such as scientific statements, clearly provided conditions under which they could be shown to be true or false; they could be **falsified**.

However, he held that this was not the same for religious propositions. Routinely, Ayer claimed that there are no conditions of falsifiability for their propositions as they are presented with contradictory conditions to only **qualifications** to their propositions rather than falsifying them.

Flew did not take these examples to support this idea but rather presented a scenario often referred to as the **parable of the invisible gardener**.

Flew's parable details two individuals, a believer and a sceptic, who are observing a patch of land. The believer claims it is tended by a gardener, while the sceptic rejects this proposal.

They both stay and observe the garden but witness no gardener. Eventually, the believer comes to insist this gardener must be invisible and tending the garden in secret, despite all the evidence to the contrary.

The sceptic, on the other hand, takes what Flew holds to be the reasonable position: 'There is no gardener whatsoever.'

Flew holds that the believer in the parable is equivalent to a theist. Theists profess belief in God, but do not accept the evidence that contradicts his existence, instead adding new **qualifications** to their original theory, even if these render the theory somewhat absurd.

The issues with whether verifiability proposed was falsifiability reasonably shown.

This criterion was it as a way of dealing with it. However, the philosophy was not limited to this and was effectively not.

Falsification

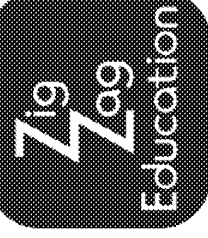
Parable of the Invisible Gardener

Flew uses his parable to demonstrate that a meaningful proposal must be able to be falsified by the death of a thousand qualifications.

A contemporary example of this might be found in the existence of evil. While the existence of evil appears to be a contradiction for an omnipotent, benevolent God, theists invent qualifications to justify their beliefs.

Yet these kinds of qualification in religious language are being **arbitrary**, invented for the sake of holding onto a belief even when all the evidence points to his non-existence.

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments

Attempting to define what 'unlimited' means gives rise to the **omnipotence paradox**. Typically, this problem is expressed in the famous example of the **paradox of the stone**.

This asks whether God can create a stone too heavy for him to lift. If he cannot create the stone, he is not all-powerful, but if he can create the stone, then he ceases to be all-powerful.

This paradox reveals a key issue with viewing omnipotence as **unlimited or limitless power**: if an omnipotent being can restrict their own power, then they are no longer omnipotent; but if they can't, then they can't have been omnipotent in the first place.

There have been many solutions proposed to the omnipotence paradox. Some argue that framing the problem in the right way leads to its dissolution, while others hold that the term 'omnipotence' itself should be replaced with another.

Descartes, for example, simply held that there is **no paradox**, for God is beyond the **limits of logic**.

Aquinas, on the other hand, argued that omnipotence means God can perform any logically possible action. Creating a stone too big for an omnipotent being to lift, he held, resulted in a **logical contradiction**, so under his definition the paradox is resolved.

However, critics pointed out that it is logically possible for human beings to create a stone too heavy for them to lift. Similarly, it may not be logically impossible for God to restrict or self-limit his own power. Aquinas here may not be right.

The paradox of omnipotence leads to questions about whether God is **essentially or accidentally** omnipotent: if the former, rather than the latter, then God cannot possibly self-limit his own power. William Lane Craig, for example, argues that if God is **essentially** omnipotent, then he cannot perform any action that would restrict his power. If God is **accidentally** omnipotent, then he can perform any action, but he is not **essentially** omnipotent, and thus he can never act to change this aspect of his person.

Richard Swinburne, however, argues that the issue is with believing God has **omnitemporal essential omnipotence**. God cannot have changed the past to restrict his own omnipotence; this is **logically incoherent**. But there is no contradiction in holding that a future event could restrict the power of an omnipotent being. God's omnipotence is to some degree accidental.

'Omnipotence' is typically used to refer to the all-powerful nature of God. This traditionally has been thought to mean that God possesses **unlimited power**.

However, there are questions as to what power without limits means. Can there be no restriction on God's power or ability? Can God do anything that is logically possible?

What is Omnipotence?

Omnipotence

The Nature or Attributes of God

Omniscient

Benevolence

Aquinas

Benevolence (or **compassion**) is the view that God is all-powerful and all-wise in particular is important for Christianity as it supports the belief that God is personally invested in the lives of human beings.

However, benevolence also comes into conflict with other attributes. Most notably, it is part of the **inconsistent triad** alongside omnipotence, which leads to the **problem of evil**.

Furthermore, benevolence is thought to support other beliefs about God being **just**. This leads to issues around omniscience and free will. Boethius, for example, was concerned with how God could meaningfully judge human actions if he already knew the outcome of future events. Such knowledge would make humans no longer free.

God is traditionally seen as a necessary existence that has always existed and can never cease to exist. However, God's existence is not necessarily an attribute to understand. Attributes to understand are finite. Attempts to understand God's eternal nature are problematic. Nevertheless, God's attributes are not necessarily attributes, such as human free will.

When discussing the nature of God, a key point for theists is often the classical view of God. This holds that God is **omniscient, transcendent, benevolent**.

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments

Like Boethius' presentism, Anselm's four-dimensionalism is proposed to solve the conflict between free will and omniscience. Since God is not contained within time, but is outside it, God's omniscience does not entail foreknowledge of future events. It imposes only **conditional necessity** upon human actions.

What appears to be a conflict between omniscience and free will is due to the limitations of the finite human mind, bound by the physical and temporal restrictions of our three-dimensional world.



However, critics of Boethius and Anselm have questioned whether their proposals truly resolve the conflict. Moreover, many have asked whether **timelessness** itself is a coherent notion when it comes to omniscience.

For instance, if God truly does know everything, shouldn't that simply involve God knowing the outcome of past and future events? Under Anselm's interpretation, God appears to be more of a **passive observer** than an active participant in the world.

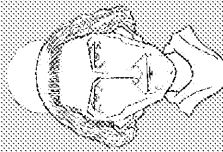
Moreover, there are difficult implications of God's timeless knowledge. Anthony Kenny notes that if Anselm is correct, then, for God, both the birth and death of Henry VIII occur at the same time, along with every other event, including the beginning of the universe!

While it can be argued that these absurd ramifications of human imagination, it is difficult to reconcile Anselm's timeless interpretation of God with the very interventionist, personal God of Scripture. As **Richard Swinburne** points out, God is not a mere observer but an integral part of Christian biblical history.

Anselm builds upon Boethius' presentism, proposing a theory of God's eternity now known as **four-dimensionalism**.

Anselm's basic proposal is that there is a fourth dimension of time on top of the three-dimensional world human beings can observe and interact with. This fourth dimension constrains events only within the first, second, and third dimensions of the physical world; we cannot interact with events only in the fourth dimension.

This does not mean a separation between the world and the world. For Anselm, all dimensions are contained within God, who, through his immanence, perceives everything within an eternal present.



Anselm

Anselm

The Conflict between Attributes of God

Eternity, Omniscience and Free Will

Divine Self-limitation

Divine self-limitation is perceived by Swinburne to address numerous conflicts between the attributes of omniscience and free will. However, this self-limitation is a controversial issue. It suggests that omniscience is in some way not **essential** and is instead **accidental**. Many theists would reject this view.

It can be argued that Swinburne has just devised a God of his choosing and failed to properly reconcile the conflicts between the attributes of the God of **classical theism**.

Other thinkers also hold that Swinburne's beliefs about immutability are mistaken. Divine love is not the same as human love. God can be benevolent, just and personally invested in humanity without having to self-limit or change. Swinburne's compromises are just a failure of imagination.

Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy* about the omniscience / free will conflict solution lay in correctly understanding the nature of time and eternity.

The key aspect of his proposals was that, at any one time, he grasps all events in an eternal present, occurring simultaneously from God's perspective.

This means God's knowledge is never incomplete or a future. Boethius' **presentism** allows God has an awareness of all things that occur simultaneously from God's perspective, necessitating outcomes of events that human beings.

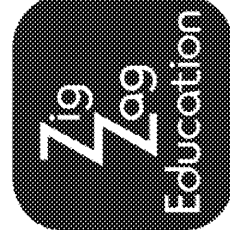
Swinburne argues that omniscience and free will are compatible. God, being eternal, possesses foreknowledge of all events, which concern the future.

However, this view of omniscience as foreknowledge upon the creation of the world is problematic.

Swinburne argues for **libertarianism**, where divine foreknowledge is rejected. God's knowledge can change his will, which is necessary and reasonable.

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5. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic

Pseudo-Dionysius was a Christian thinker from the fifth/sixth century CE who argued in favour of the via negativa.

He argued that the transcendence and greatness of God meant the terms and categories of ordinary language were unsuitable for capturing his being.

However, through the use of negative language, Pseudo-Dionysius claimed human beings could move outside the world of sensory experience and advance towards a higher level of understanding about God.

The apophatic way, or **via negativa**, is a form of religious language. It holds that it is possible to meaningfully talk about God by describing what he is not; in other words, by using **negative language**.

The key advantage is that one is not as restricted by human language, experience and ideas when talking about God. For example, since God's power has no limits, it is impossible to use the nature of his creative power to draw analogies or comparisons with human beings.

Pseudo-Dionysius

Maimonides

Maimonides, a twelfth-century Jewish scholar, presented a well-known argument in favour of the via negativa using the example of a ship.

He claimed that if one is reasonably certain that a ship exists, one can repeatedly ask questions that focus on eliminating properties that a ship does not possess. These might include questions such as 'Does a ship have wheels?' or 'Does a ship travel on land?'

Maimonides' contention is that this process will eventually lead an individual to a concrete notion of what a ship is. Moreover, this process can apply to the being of God himself. By defining what God is not, one can eventually arrive at a deeper comprehension of what God truly is.

One common criticism of the via negativa is that there are aspects of God that cannot be meaningfully described or understood using negative language.

Brian Davies criticises Maimonides' example, arguing that the elimination of properties can never reveal whether individuals are conceiving of the divine. Similarly, Antony Flew argued that the via negativa describes something which is apophatic in a way that would equate to describing something that does not exist.

Neither of these criticisms claims that the via negativa can't be useful, just that positive language is also necessary. In fact, it can be contended that the via negativa relies on a **pre-existing understanding** of the terms involved, which naturally will draw on positive definitions. The cataphatic way might be necessary to make sense of the apophatic way.

The Apophatic Way

The Apophatic Way and the Cataphatic Way

Aquinas

William Blackstone argues that the via negativa is less meaningful than the via positiva because statements that have to be made about God in negative language in order to be complete involve, thus, there is still the risk of incomprehensibility and paradoxism.

Analogies of attribution and proportionality also assume some base similarity between human beings and God. However, it may be that this assumption is unwarranted.

Vincent Brümmer notes that the inaccessibility of God means it is unclear whether comparisons with human beings are valid. Moreover, a strong focus on **proportionality** ends up relying on negative language more than positive analogy does, questioning the usefulness of the via positiva.

Aquinas argued that the via positiva was the more meaningful way to talk about God.

He contended that analogies between univocal and equivocal language are meaningful comparisons acknowledging the limitations of human language.

Aquinas also proposed that the via negativa is a legitimate way to talk about God with legitimate attribution. This holds that it is possible to draw conclusions about a creator from the effects of creation.

The second is through the via positiva, which holds that it is possible to draw conclusions about a creator from the effects of creation. This is proportionately more meaningful than the via negativa.

A key distinction in the use of language is between **non-cognitive propositions** and **cognitive propositions**.

Cognitive propositions are those which can be evaluated as true or false. They involve statements that can be objectively verified.

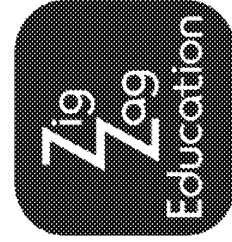
Non-cognitive propositions are those which cannot be evaluated as true or false, and are dependent upon the utterer's beliefs or feelings.

Cognitive and Non-cognitive Propositions

Why Language?

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5. Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic

Importantly, Tillich argues that only **symbolic language** can capture the philosophical insights offered by Christian theology. Conversely, employing literal, positive statements about God only leads to **anthropomorphic, contradictory** interpretations of his being and fails to address the key existential questions at the heart of human life and living.

Symbols are much more flexible. They allow human beings to develop deeper insights into the world that aren't limited by the constraints of language. They open up the human psyche to different levels of reality it might not ordinarily experience and point to deeper, richer meanings within religious concepts, ideas and phenomena.

Thus, symbols avoid the constraints of both the **literal** and the **analogical**. One key example in Christianity is the **cross**. It holds that the cross represents a vast set of thoughts, feelings and experiences that cannot be captured by conventional discourse. This depth of meaning is only accessible through the **symbolic** language. One takes a cognitive approach to religious language.

Symbols are naturally rife throughout the Christian religion. However, Tillich goes a step further and holds that all religious claims are symbolic in nature. Even statements such as 'God created the world' are not intended to be taken literally.

However, symbols are also not just blindly created to fulfil linguistic needs. They require continued human participation, such that they naturally occupy a role within the **cultural context** of their creation. The meaning of symbols is shaped gradually by this participation until it achieves the richness and depth suitable for religious reflection.

Moreover, the meaning of symbols can dynamically change over time as new events, ideas and concepts inform how human beings engage with them. Symbols are never just static representations.

While symbols occupy an important place in religion, critics of Tillich often remain doubtful about whether symbolic language can provide a comprehensive account of how theists talk about God.

One key issue is that many theists would claim that symbols can only make **cognitive, truth-claims** about God and his relationship to the world. It comes to straightforward propositions such as 'God exists'.

In both religious and secular discourse, propositions are often debated according not to their symbolic meaning, but to whether they reflect genuine truths about God and the world. For critics of Tillich, it is questionable whether all religious discourse encompasses reflection on symbolic language. There may be some **factual claims** at the heart of Christianity which are more than symbols.

Paul Tillich was a twentieth-century existentialist philosopher who placed symbolic language at the centre of his philosophy. Tillich held that nearly all academic disciplines are part of history, eventually addressing the meaning of life in what appears to be an incoherent, unshensible universe.

Moreover, he argues that Christian theology is a discipline capable of giving meaningful answers to the questions that arise out of this issue. Through **methods of correlation**, he contends that only insights from Christian theology to existential questions raised by other academic disciplines.

Paul Tillich

Religious Language at Symbol

Symbols and Religious Discourse

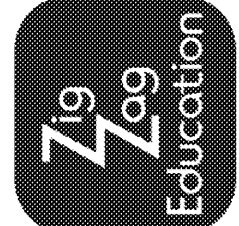
Tillich's concept of symbols reflects his **classical theism**. He argues that **symbolic language** tends to paint God as just another being on top of a hierarchy of beings.

Thinking in this way means discourse around God tends to deal in absolutes and leads to theologians thinking about God as a set of attributes, such as 'omnipotent'. This naturally leads to **logical inconsistencies** and **contradictions** when talking about God.

A more fruitful approach, for Tillich, is to view God as the source of all being. Thus a different kind of **ontology** is emphasised when talking about God, one which can be represented only through **symbolic language**. For only this form can reach beyond our ordinary understanding of the world and the language we use to describe it.

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6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives

The logical positivists adopted Hume's distinction, holding that cognitive statements had to be either **synthetically** or **analytically** truth-evaluable.

This led to the development of the **verification principle**. This stated that any statement is meaningful only if it can be **verified** through empirical evidence or through it being analytically true.

Therefore, unless a statement could be confirmed or verified through some form of **sense experience** (and so be **synthetic, a posteriori**), or be **tautologically true** (the meanings of the terms involved (analytic, a priori) then the logical positivists would be not meaningful. This principle excluded a range of statements from non-scientific fields, including those that were religious in nature, which were not verifiable through sense experience or analytically true.

A J Ayer continued the work of the logical positivists in his book *Language, Truth and Logic*. There he claimed that the verification principle rendered religious claims meaningless, since they were predicated upon metaphysical ideas (e.g. God) that could not be verified.

However, he claimed the original **strong verification principle** put forward by the logical positivists was too strict. Instead, he proposed a **weak version of the verification principle**, where propositions had to be only **theoretically** verifiable, not practically.

For Ayer, this weaker verification principle still outlawed metaphysical and religious claims as meaningless. However, it enabled logical positivism to accommodate a wider set of scientific statements, especially those that were historical or lawful in nature.

Ayer's work is important, as many secular critics have focused on how the strong verification principle makes **historical propositions** meaningless. Geology, evolutionary theory and other fields all rely on evidence from the past, which are not directly verifiable through sense experience.

Moreover, it was difficult to see how one could verify scientific talk of **unobservable entities** such as subatomic particles, which were beyond sense experience. The strong verification principle also struggled with accommodating **laws of nature**. For it would be impossible to verify in practice a claim such as 'all swans are white' without directly observing every swan at once!

The logical positivists were a group of philosophers in the early twentieth century who were concerned with understanding the conditions under which a statement was **cognitively meaningful**. This meant defining how particular statement could be declared true or false with reasonable certainty.

Logical positivism was an influential 20th-century empiricist philosophy. Its important foundation was **Hume's fork**, which divided human matters of fact and relations of ideas. The latter concerned statements that were **a posteriori**, contingent and synthetic, whereas the latter concerned statements that were **a priori**, necessary and analytic.

The Verification Principle

Logical Positivism

A J Ayer

Logical Positivism and Language Games

Language Game

Ayer's verification principle, despite addressing concerns of strictness, was itself criticised for being too lenient. For it is not clear what 'theoretically' means when it comes to verification.

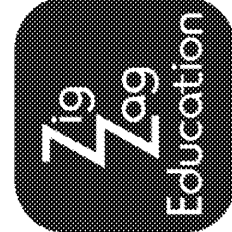
John Hick, for instance, proposed that religious propositions could be **eschatologically verifiable** under Ayer's principle, since it is theoretically possible religious claims could be verified in the afterlife if not now.

Vincent Brümmer goes further and argues that Ayer mistakes religious statements as being scientific propositions. They are **proclamations of faith** and have different criteria of meaningfulness.

Dorothy Emmet similarly contends the **analogical nature** of religious claims means they are rooted both in faith and observation. They aren't wholly verifiable but can be supported by empirical evidence.

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It is unclear whether support is given to the notion of coherence between statements, whether or not. Some have argued that circular reasoning is a problem for propositional logic, but in the game, the propositional logic is constructed. Christian claims are not fit a cognitive game, but a game.

Out of the arguments collected, how can a particular statement be made? Each of the forms of statements means something outside the game.

6. Religious Language: Twentieth-century Perspectives

Flew argued that meaningful propositions, such as scientific statements, clearly provided conditions under which they could be shown to be true or false; they could be **falsified**.

However, he held that this was not the same for religious propositions. Routinely, Ayer claimed that theists do not provide conditions of falsifiability for their propositions and, when presented with contradictory evidence, offer only **qualifications** to their propositions, rather than rejecting them.

Flew did not give specific examples to support this; he rather presented a scenario often referred to as the **parable of the invisible gardener**.

Flew's parable details two individuals, a believer and a sceptic, who are observing a patch of land. The believer claims it is tended by a gardener, while the sceptic rejects this proposal.

They both stay and observe the garden but witness no gardener. Eventually, the believer comes to insist this gardener must be invisible and tending the garden in secret, despite all the evidence to the contrary.

The sceptic, on the other hand, takes what Flew holds to be the reasonable position; there is no gardener whatsoever.

Flew holds that the believer in the parable is equivalent to the theist. Theists profess belief in God, but do not accept the evidence that contradicts his existence, instead adding new **qualifications** to their original theory, even if these render the theory somewhat absurd.

Flew intends his parable to demonstrate that a reasonable meaningful proposal must be falsifiable. If not, it 'dies the death of a thousand qualifications'.

A contemporary example of this can be found in the **problem of evil**. While the existence of God appears to be a clear issue for belief in an omnipotent, benevolent God, theists invent complex theodicies to justify their beliefs.

Yet these kinds of qualification in religious language, for Flew, risk just being **arbitrary**, invented for the sake of holding onto a belief in God even when all the evidence points to his non-existence.

The issues with the verification principle led philosophers to question whether verifiability was a good criterion of meaning. One alternative proposed was **falsifiability**: whether a particular proposition could be reasonably shown to be true or false when tested.

This criterion was originally proposed by Karl Popper, who envisioned it as a way of demarcating between scientific and non-scientific discourse. However, the philosopher who first believed that falsifiability was not limited to a particular issue. In fact, it could show how religious language was effectively meaningless.

Falsification

Antony Flew

Parable of the Invisible Gardener

The Falsification Symposium

Upon publication, Flew opened up his ideas to criticism from other thinkers, which eventually led to a number of replies that were published alongside his original paper in a 1971 text titled *Theology and Falsification*. This is more commonly known now as the **Falsification Symposium**.

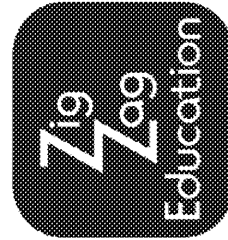
The first reply to Flew's parable was given by R M Hare. However, instead of directly challenging Flew's argument, he offered a counter-parable.

This concerned a student who is convinced that all university dons are out to harm them, no matter how much evidence is presented to them by their friends or how nice the dons are to them. Even this evidence is taken to be surreptitious attempts by the dons to eventually harm them.

The key takeaway from Hare's parable is that there is not a direct connection between a person's beliefs and the evidence that supports those beliefs. Instead, everything we observe and understand is filtered through a particular world view or perspective, a phenomenon Hare calls a **blitz**.

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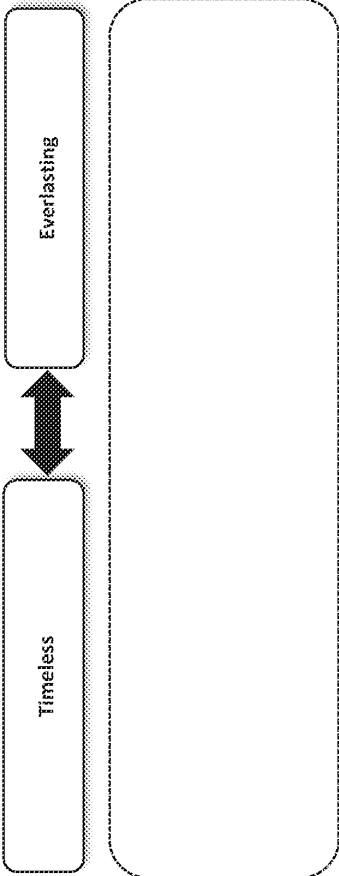


4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Nature or Attributes of God

1. Define the concepts listed in the table below.

Omnipotence	
Benevolence	
Omniscience	
Free will	

2. Explain the difference between these two concepts in the context of God's eternality.



3. How do the thinkers below differ in their definitions of omnipotence?

1. René Descartes

2. Thomas Aquinas

4. Circle the correct words in b

Theists commonly believe that human beings have genuine (power) determined by external forces. This is (in) (order/responsibility) to be meaningful.

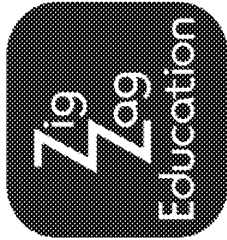
However, this form of free will connotes (power/knowing/all-powerful), then God's actions implies all human actions are (pre-

Moreover, this issue also calls into question human beings for their actions if they will therefore also calls into question

5. "God can self-limit his own power, therefore, it is no longer a power." Discuss.

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Conflicts between Attributes of God

1. Quick quiz on divine attributes!

- i) What is the term for the unchanging nature of God?
.....
- ii) What is the name of the view that God is non-interventionist?
.....
- iii) What term is used to describe how God is in the physical world?
.....
- iv) What is the quality of God that is not subject to change?
.....



2. Explain the difference between the two concepts.

Simple nature



Conditional

4. Give two ways in which Anselm expands upon and develops Boethius' presentism.

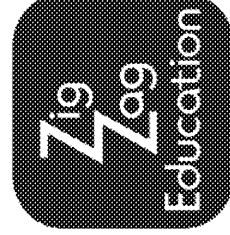
i)

ii)



5. To what extent is Anselm's four-dimensionalism successful in reconciling the conflict between divine omniscience and free will?

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5. Religious Language: The Apophatic Way and the Cataphatic Way

1. Explain the difference between the forms of religious language below.

The apophatic way

The cataphatic way

2. Quick quiz on the Education way!

i) What is another term for the cataphatic way?

ii) Which sixth-century figure argued in favour of the cataphatic way?

iii) What example did Maimonides use to illustrate the validity of the cataphatic way?

3. How did Brian Davies criticise Maimonides' argument for the apophatic way?

4. Match the terms

Cognitive

Non-cognitive

Equivocal

Univocal

5. Is Aquinas correct in arguing that the cataphatic can talk meaningfully about God?

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5. Religious Language: Symbolic Language

1. Fill in the gaps below to summarise Tillich's views on symbolic language.

Symbolic language attempts to describe God primarily through
_____. It uses words or _____ to stand in for
particular concept and point towards a _____.

Symbols are not the _____, as they can contain a
variety of meanings and often encourage _____ by
those engaging with them.

Symbolic language is often thought to be _____, as
symbols do not convey straightforward factual information
and instead rely on the _____ interpretation of those
participating in them.

2. Give one example of a symbol and explain how it fits Tillich's definition.

3. Give two advantages to symbolic language identified

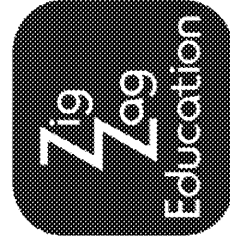
1.

2.

5. 'Symbolic language is too subjective for developing meaningful statements about God.' Discuss.

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5. Religious Language: Logical Positivism and Language Games

1. Fill in the table below with the correct definitions of these key terms.

Synthetic	
Analytic	
Empiricism	
Tautology	

2. Explain the difference between the two concepts below.

Strong verification



Weak verification

3. Explain how language games arise out of different forms of thought. Give an example to illustrate your point.

4. Give one criticism of

Strong verification

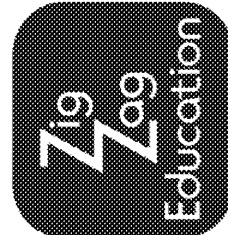
Weak verification

5. Non-cognitive approaches to

6. Is verification a valid test

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5. Religious Language: The Falsification Symposium

1. Fill in the gaps to summarise the parable of the invisible gardener.

Flew's parable details the experiences of two different

individuals: the _____ and the _____.

On observing a patch of land, the first individual claims it is

tended by a _____, while the second holds that it is not. As they continue to observe the patch of land, _____, they tend to _____.

The first individual the _____ uses about and qualifications

to his original claim, proposing that the person tending the land is

_____ and is maintaining it in secret. The second individual disagrees.

Flew holds the first individual is equivalent to the _____, who professes belief in God but does not accept evidence that

_____ his existence, while the second is equivalent to the _____.

2. Quick quiz on falsification!

1. Who originally proposed falsification in the context of demarcating science and pseudoscience?

2. What does Flew claim many scientists make to their theories in the face of falsifying evidence?

3. What are Flew's original paper and the collection of responses commonly called?

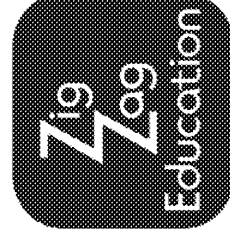
3. Using an example, explain how theists may fail to provide criteria of falsifiability when developing propositions.

4. Briefly summarise the counter-arguments given by Basil Mitchell.

R M Hare

Basil Mitchell

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Mark Schemes

Examiners will be using a general mark scheme to mark the candidate's answer, and expect for a specific answer. These can be viewed on the OCR website.

The following tables should give you an idea of which kinds of answers get awarded

A Level (AO1)

Level	Band	What type of answer
6	14–16 	This answer is excellent because: - it answers the question with sophistication - points are relevant and well selected - all knowledge and understanding shown is correct, with originality - the answer is clear and has, consistently and throughout, precise - there is a large range of references to scholarly theories
5	11–13	This answer is very good because: - it answers the question thoroughly - points are relevant and used properly - all knowledge and understanding shown is correct, with - the answer is clear and has used specialist terminology - there is a very good number of references to scholarly theories
4	8–10	This answer is good because: - it answers the question - points are relevant and mostly used properly - most of the knowledge and understanding shown is correct - the answer is clear, and specialist terminology is used - there is a good number of references to scholarly theories
3	5–7	This is a satisfactory answer because: - it mostly answers the question - most of the points are relevant - some correct knowledge and understanding is shown, with enough detail - the answer is quite clear, and specialist terminology is used - some scholarly theories and/or works are referred to
2	3–4	This is a basic answer because: - the question is answered in a general way - some relevant points are mentioned - there is some correct but limited knowledge and understanding - some correct but limited specialist terminology is used - there is limited referencing to scholarly theories and/or works
1	1–2 	This is a weak answer because: - most of the response does not answer the question - a lot of relevant content is missing - very little knowledge and understanding of the topic is shown - specialist terminology is very rarely mentioned - there is little reference to scholarly theories and/or works
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit

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A Level (AO2)

Level	Band	What type of answer
6	21–24	This is an excellent answer because: - the argument is effective and insightful - there is insightful critical analysis and evaluation - points are clear, and positions are robustly justified - the answer is clear and has, consistently and throughout, precisely - there is a large range of references to scholarly theories and evaluation Overall, this answer is well reasoned, detailed, integrated and
5	17–20	This is a very good answer because: - the argument is generally successful - the analysis and evaluation are clear - points are clear, detailed and justified - it answers the question entirely - it is clear and has used specialist terminology consistently - there is a very good number of references to scholarly theories and evaluation Overall, this answer is detailed, relevant, integrated and logical
4	13–16	This is a good answer because: - the argument is effective and clear - there is good analysis and evaluation - points are made clearly and contain adequate justification - it answers the question - it is clear, and specialist terminology is used correctly - there is a good number of references to scholarly theories and evaluation Overall, this answer is detailed, with relevant material and
3	9–12	This is a satisfactory answer because: - the argument is mostly successful - there is mostly successful analysis and evaluation - points are made with some justification but not fully - it mainly answers the question - it is quite clear, and specialist terminology is used correctly - some scholarly theories and/or works are referred to for Overall, this answer is mainly relevant and has some structure
2	5–8	This is a basic answer because: - there is some evidence that an argument is being made - there is some analysis and evaluation, but this is limited - points are made but without enough justification - it doesn't answer the question fully - some correct but limited specialist terminology is used - it is limited in referencing scholarly theories and/or works Overall, this answer is mostly relevant with some structure
1	1–4	This is a weak answer because: - there is little evidence of an argument being made - there is a lack of analysis and evaluation - points are made without any or enough justification - it does not answer the question - specialist terminology is very rarely mentioned - there is little reference to scholarly theories and/or works Overall, this answer lacks structure and clarity.
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit

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4. Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Nature or Attributes of God

1. **Omnipotence** – The attribute of being all-powerful or powerful without limit.
Benevolence – The attribute of being all-loving or wholly good.
Omniscience – The attribute of being all-knowing.
Free will – The ability to perform actions of one's own volition, free from external constraints.

2. **Timeless** – The view that being eternal means being outside time, such that God has no temporal limitations and maintains an atemporal perspective on the world.
Everlasting – The view that being eternal means being within time, such that God has temporal limitations and experiences the world as a past, present and future.

3. **Descartes** – Omnipotence means that power is without limit; God can do what is logically possible, but is not subject to the limits of logic.
Aquinas – Omnipotence means the power to do whatever is logically possible, but is not subject to the limits of logic.

4. A number of possible differences can be listed, including:

- Theists commonly believe that human beings possess **libertarian** free will. Human beings have genuine **power** and **agency** over their choices and are not under external constraints. This form of free will is thought to be essential in order for moral responsibility to be possible.
- However, this form of free will comes into conflict with God's **omniscience**. If God is all-knowing, then God arguably possesses foreknowledge of future events. If this is the case, then human actions are **predetermined** and not the result of free will.
- Moreover, this issue also draws into question God's **justness**. For how can God be just in punishing beings for their actions if their outcome is already determined? The concept of free will therefore also calls into question God's **benevolence**.

5. **Exam-style question – 'God can self-limit his own omnipotence; therefore, omnipotence is not an attribute.'** Discuss.

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of the following points:

- Omnipotence is traditionally thought to mean that God is powerful without limit.
- However, this definition gives rise to the paradox of omnipotence: if God is all-powerful, then God can create a stone so heavy that he cannot lift it. If God cannot lift the stone, then God is not all-powerful. Some thinkers have suggested that this is simply a consequence of God's omnipotence.
- However, others have suggested that this is unsatisfactory, for it makes the paradox of omnipotence rather than essential.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of the following points:

- **God can self-limit his own omnipotence:** The paradox of omnipotence, in the same manner as human beings can do things that are beyond their capabilities, shows that the issue in the paradox of omnipotence is with omnitemporality. If God is timeless, then it is reasonable to suppose God might self-limit his power by creating a world with free beings.
- **God cannot self-limit his own omnipotence:** If God's omnipotence is an attribute of his nature, then God should not be subject to the limits of logic in the first place. God may simply be capable of any act that is consistent with his nature. Omnipotence may be better framed as almighty or unsurpassable in power.

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6. **Exam-style question – Has any thinker given a satisfactory solution to the paradox of omnipotence?**

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of:

- Omnipotence is traditionally thought to mean that God is powerful with respect to all things.
- However, this definition gives rise to the paradox of omnipotence: if God is all-powerful, such as producing a stone that is too heavy for him to lift, then God is not all-powerful.
- Various solutions have been given to the paradox; some focus on restricting the scope of omnipotence while others look at how God might be able to self-limit his power. Others argue that the concept of omnipotence should be redefined altogether.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of:

- **There is a satisfactory solution:** It is logically possible for God to self-limit his power. The paradox is not a paradox; omnipotence means being able to do anything that is logically possible. The concept of omnipotence should be replaced with a better term such as 'almightiness' or 'unsurpassable power, not power without limitation'; God is not subject to the limitations of logic.
- **There is not a satisfactory solution:** God requires essential omnipotence. Any restriction on his power, such as creating a stone too heavy to lift is logically possible, is not solving the paradox but admitting it is insoluble. If omnipotence is not solving the paradox but admitting it is insoluble, then logic itself has no meaning.

4. **Theological and Philosophical Developments: The Conflicts between**

1. i) Immutability
ii) Deism
iii) Transcendence
iv) Eternity
2. **Simple necessity:** States of affairs that occur due to the nature of the things themselves.
Conditional necessity: States of affairs that are due to the powers of an agent or an agent's choice, not because of their nature or a general law.
3. Boethius argues that God's knowledge of human choices involves conditional necessity. This means it does not encompass any restrictions on future events. God's knowledge is of the necessity of human actions in his present moment of observation. The only restriction that entails is that if an event occurs, it will necessarily occur.
4. i) Anselm proposes that time is a fourth dimension on top of a three-dimensional world. All beings are subject to the restrictions from being within this temporal dimension.
ii) All these dimensions are contained within God, although God is not within them. God is both transcendent and immanent and how God perceives everything.
5. **Exam-style question – To what extent is Anselm's four-dimensionalism successful in reconciling divine foreknowledge with free will?**
AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of:
 - Anselm argues that there are four dimensions: three physical and one temporal.
 - All beings are contained within these four dimensions and so are subject to the restrictions of time.
 - God is not contained within these four dimensions and so observes the world from outside of time.
 - This means that God's knowledge is only of the present, not of the past or future. This means that God's knowledge is only of the present, not of the past or future. This means that God's knowledge is only of the present, not of the past or future. This means that God's knowledge is only of the present, not of the past or future.

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AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation

- **Anselm is successful:** Anselm successfully shows how God only has knowledge of the present being in an atemporal present; Boethius' distinction between simple and eternal knowledge demonstrates how knowledge does not impose constraints on free agents; time matches our intuitive understanding of time and space; it is reasonable to suppose that time would perceive time differently.
- **Anselm is not successful:** Anselm's God does not match the interventionist model; if God becomes a mere passive observer of events; omniscience should not be applied to future events otherwise God cannot be said to be all-knowing; it is impossible to know what a God outside time would observe as our own knowledge of time is limited; four-dimensionalism is mere speculation about God rather than a coherent concept.

6. Exam-style question – Is divine self-limitation a coherent concept when talking about God?

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion

- There is typically thought to be a conflict between omniscience and free will; if God knows the future, then the future is fixed; the outcome of future events is predetermined.
- One possible solution is that God's knowledge of the future is limited, so that God only knows what will happen up to a certain point in time.
- Such a solution is consistent with the idea of omniscience so long as it is God's own omniscience, not any external force.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation

- **Divine self-limitation is coherent:** What is problematic, as Swinburne states, is that God knows the future in the face of free agents, yet it is reasonable to suppose that upon reflection God would self-limit his own omnipotence – such a view is scripturally supported; it does not imply that God could not know the future, just that God chooses to limit his knowledge; self-limitation is coherent with an everlasting God, not a timeless one; it is not incoherent to suggest God has the universal power to restrict aspects of himself.
- **Divine self-limitation is not coherent:** God is timeless, not everlasting, so being contained in time is nonsensical; it is difficult to understand meaningful self-limitation if being could change himself while still remaining omniscient; Anselm and Aquinas' views on omniscience does not entail divine foreknowledge of events – there is no way to know what God knows; Swinburne's ideas about self-limitation deviate too much from the God of the Bible; simply reinvents God to fix conflicts between divine attributes.

5. Religious Language: The Apophatic Way and the Cataphatic Way

1. The apophatic way – It is possible to talk meaningfully about God by describing what God is not, by using negative language.
The cataphatic way – It is possible to talk meaningfully about God through describing what God is, by using positive language.
2. i) Via positiva
ii) Pseudo-Dionysius
iii) Aquinas
3. Brian Davies argues that eliminating properties can never reveal whether individuals are talking about the same thing. In the case of Maimonides' ship, even if every possible negative property of a ship was eliminated, it would be impossible to tell whether two individuals discussing the ship were talking about the same ship since there is no positive external reference both individuals could point to. The cataphatic way alone is not suitable for talking about God; it does not allow coherent, consistent discussion between different parties.

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4. Cognitive – Propositions that can be evaluated as true or false
 Non-cognitive – Propositions that cannot be evaluated as true or false
 Equivocal – Propositions that have more than one potential meaning
 Univocal – Propositions that have only one unambiguous meaning

5. **Exam-style question – Is Aquinas correct in arguing that the cataphatic way is the best way to describe God?**

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of:

- The cataphatic way holds that it is possible to talk meaningfully about God using human language.
- However, there is the issue that God is a very different being from humans and whether language used to describe a finite world is suitable for an infinite being.
- Aquinas holds that one has to use analogical language, which is capable of describing elements of the finite world while acknowledging the limitations of human language.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of arguments:

- **Aquinas is correct:** Use of analogical language, especially with analogies of proportionality, can describe God while acknowledging the ways that he is different from humans; Aquinas strikes a good balance between univocal and equivocal language; the cataphatic way can describe any being, while the apophatic way can only be used to describe what God is not; it is reasonable to assume there is some base similarity between God and humans, making analogies warranted.
- **Aquinas is incorrect:** It is fallacious to assume that God and human beings are similar; analogies of proportionality and attribution are meaningless; the cataphatic way anthropomorphises God; using proportionality results in a significant distortion of God's nature; the apophatic way is a better way to make the cataphatic way meaningful; analogical statements still use human language, meaning they aren't meaningfully proportional.

6. **Exam-style question – 'The cataphatic way is required to make sense of the apophatic way.'**

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of:

- The cataphatic way holds that it is possible to talk meaningfully about God using human language.
- The apophatic way holds that it is possible to talk meaningfully about God using negative language.
- Critics have often argued, however, that the apophatic way struggles by itself to generate solid ideas about the nature or being of God. Either it relies upon positive descriptions of terms that are then negated, or it becomes impossible to tell whether the ideas generated by the apophatic way are in fact arriving at the same ideas as the cataphatic way.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of arguments:

- **The apophatic way does require the cataphatic way:** Without the cataphatic way to define or talk about terms used in the apophatic way, the apophatic way cannot generate solid ideas through negation; the apophatic way only makes sense in relation to the understanding of concepts developed by the cataphatic way.
- **The apophatic way does not require the cataphatic way:** The apophatic way is a way of using the limits of human language – it is not intended to use pre-existing concepts. M. M. J. shows through the example of a shop how the apophatic way can generate a comprehension of a concept; religions such as Buddhism use the apophatic way to describe nirvana.

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5. Religious Language: Symbolic Language

1. Symbolic language attempts to describe God primarily through **representative** stand in for a particular concept and point towards a **deeper meaning**. Symbols are not the same as **signs**, as they can contain a variety of meanings and **participation** by those engaging with them. Symbolic language is often thought to be **non-cognitive**, as symbols do not convey information and instead rely on the **subjective** interpretation of those participants.

2. There are many possible examples. An obvious one is the flag of a country so. Although it primarily represents the countries within the kingdom, many people have meanings around the principles of liberal democracy and unity. Thus, many people symbol by flying it outside their house or as part of public events in order to

3. **Students might make the following points:**

- i) Symbols are **capable** much more flexible than conventional forms of language and can provide deeper insights into the world that aren't limited by words.
- ii) Symbols **prevent** anthropomorphising God, as the cataphatic way also of misrepresenting God as just another being like those found in the world.
- iii) Symbols are the best way of capturing key existential insights at the heart of

4. **Students might draw following examples:**

Outdated: Christian symbols such as the chi-rho, which, while actively used, is not commonly used symbol among Christian populations today.

Distorted: The swastika; while it is a Hindu spiritual symbol, it was used by the Nazis and has problematic associations for Europeans today.

5. **Exam-style question – ‘Symbolic language is too subjective for developing a concept of God.’ Discuss.**

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of:

- Symbolic language is a non-cognitive approach to religious language philosophy.
- Tillich holds that symbolic language is capable of developing meaningful symbols not only stand in for a particular concept but point towards deeper meanings that a participant can engage with.
- Tillich holds that it is this facet of symbolic language that allows it to capture the heart of the Christian faith.
- Tillich puts forward that all religious language is by its nature symbolic, not making truth-evaluable claims but to evoke greater meanings and ideas for participants.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of:

- **Symbolic language is too subjective:** Hick notes that, unless there is fact of symbols, then it is impossible to tell whether an individual is reliably using them; symbols are too easily corrupted in meaning; symbols too easily trivialised; symbolic language does not capture the key factual claims about God.
- **Symbolic language is not too subjective:** Symbols are generated through culture and this gives them stability in meaning; symbols are capable of capturing the depth of Christian faith that are inaccessible via conventional language; the culture informs participants; dynamic change is necessary for symbols, which requires that without this, symbolic language could not capture new ideas or beliefs.

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6. **Exam-style question – Does symbolic language accurately capture the way**

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion:

- Symbolic language is a non-cognitive approach to religious language put forward by Paul Tillich.
- Tillich holds that symbolic language is capable of developing meaningful symbols not only stand in for a particular concept but point towards deeper meanings that a participant can engage with.
- Tillich holds that it is this facet of symbolic language that allows it to capture the heart of the Christian faith.
- Tillich puts forward that all religious language is by its nature symbolic. It makes truth-evaluable claims but to evoke greater meanings and ideas for participants.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation:

- **Symbolic language does capture theistic talk:** Theism is concerned not with key questions about the nature of the meaning of life, for which symbolic symbols are capable of pointing towards deeper religious meanings that go beyond everyday language; religious discourse regularly makes use of symbols when talking about things like the cross, have persisted throughout the history of Christianity.
- **Symbolic language does not capture theistic talk:** The Christian faith may be expressed especially in Scripture, which cannot be captured symbolically; symbolic language is for everyday use; symbolic language cannot convey information effectively; cognitive statements are necessary to ground theistic talk; symbols cannot capture key religious ideas.

5. Religious Language: Logical Positivism and Language Games

1. **Synthetic** – Statements that are contingent and known a posteriori.
Analytic – Statements that are necessary and known a priori.
Empiricism – A philosophical theory that holds all knowledge is based on evidence.
Tautology – A statement that is true by definition or by virtue of the meaning of the words.

2. **Strong verification** – Meaningful statements are those which can be verified by being practically confirmed through sense experience.
Weak verification – Meaningful statements are those which can be verified by being theoretically confirmed through sense experience.

3. Students might include a number of examples. Wittgenstein held that forms of language through interaction between people engaged in shared games are called language games, and each language game has certain criteria of use. Terms and statements can be meaningfully constructed and used within that game. For example, builders on a building site. Other examples may be sports, video games, groups and hobbies.

4. Students might present a number of different criticisms, such as:
Strong verification criticism: Is too restrictive; eliminates not only metaphysical statements but also past events, scientific unobservables and natural laws.
Weak verification criticism: Is too permissive; through accommodating theories of religious claims to be verified eschatologically (as Hick notes).

5. **Exam-style question – ‘Non-cognitive approaches to religious language are non-cognitive approaches.’ Discuss.**

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion:

- Cognitive approaches to religious language are those which focus on it as making truth-claims.
- Non-cognitive approaches to religious are those which focus on it as making other kinds of claims.

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- Cognitive approaches are embodied by Aquinas, who held that God could be described in analogical language.
- Non-cognitive approaches are embodied by Tillich, who held that God could not be described in language. Instead, symbolic language had to be employed which relies upon the subject's personal engagement with a symbol.
- Cognitive approaches face criticism from the logical positivists, who hold that only statements which can be verified analytically or through sense experience are meaningful.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of arguments.

- **Non-cognitive approaches are more successful:** Wittgenstein's concept of language games shows how religious statements gain their meaning from internal criteria of coherence rather than external verification; Tillich's symbolic language shows how religious statements can be meaningful through subjective participation, rather than cognitive approaches can be meaningful through language better than cognitive approaches and avoid anthropomorphism.
- **Cognitive approaches are more successful:** Theism does make distinct truth-claims which require a cognitive approach; Aquinas' proposals about analogical language show how statements about God while avoiding inaccuracies or anthropomorphism can move beyond ordinary descriptive language; logical positivism are ineffective as the verification principle does not work in the case of religious statements.

6. Exam-style question – Is verification a valid test of meaning for religious propositions?

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of the verification principle.

- The verification principle is a test of cognitive meaning proposed by the logical positivists.
- It holds that a meaningful statement is one that can be verified analytically or through sense experience.
- Some thinkers, such as Ayer, have distinguished between the strong and weak verification principle. The former holds that verification in practice is required, while the latter holds that only verification in theory is required.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of arguments.

- **Verification is a valid test of meaning:** The verification principle captures the meaning of statements we hold to be meaningful; the principle devises important criteria for meaningful statements; the principle is correct in holding that sense experience is the only way we arrive at knowledge; Ayer's weak verification principle solves the problems of the strong version.
- **Verification is not a valid test of meaning:** The verification principle is too restrictive; it fails to capture many important statements we'd consider to be intuitively meaningful; the only way human beings come to knowledge of the world; Ayer's weak verification principle is too permissive and allows for eschatological verification; meaning is determined by context, such as the criterion of coherency found in language games.

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- The falsification symposium is a series of papers focused on Flew's belief of meaning which highlights the flaws in religious language and belief.
- Flew holds that theists do not make falsifiable claims and their claims fail.
- Hare holds that falsifiability is not a valid test of meaning as evidence for person's blink, not an impartial assessment of experiences.
- Mitchell holds that religious claims are falsifiable but that the theist, the faith, does not abandon them in the face of conflicting evidence.

- **Flew's argument is most convincing.** Scientific statements are always qualified, if we cannot prove something, then it is difficult to think it is meaningful. The most convincing reason in favour of theism and atheism; theists regularly make original propositions, such as in the problem of evil, and fail to meaningfully address them in the face of contradictory evidence.

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6. Exam-style question – ‘Falsifiability is not a valid test of meaning.’ Discuss.

AO1 – Students may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through discussion of:

- The falsification symposium is a series of papers focused on Flew’s belief in the falsifiability of meaning which highlights the flaws in religious language and belief.
- Flew holds that theists do not make falsifiable claims and these fail to be meaningful.
- However, other critics hold that falsification alone is not a valid test of meaning.
- Hare holds that falsifiability is not a valid test of meaning as evidence for or against religious claims is not an impartial assessment of experiences.
- Mitchell holds that religious claims are falsifiable but that the theist, though aware of conflicting evidence, does not abandon them in the face of conflicting evidence.

AO2 – Students may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through presentation of:

- **Falsifiability is a valid test of meaning:** Scientific statements are always falsifiable. If we cannot prove something true, then it is difficult to think it is meaningful. Religious statements often offer qualifications to their original proposals, such as in the problem of evil. Religious claims about God in the face of contradictory evidence are not meaningful. The qualifications of religious belief and themselves are qualifications that religious statements to Flew don’t address the primary problem of how religious statements can accommodate conflicting evidence.
- **Falsifiability is not a valid test of meaning:** There is a middle ground of meaningfulness. Religious statements are identified, for even scientists often don’t initially give up theories in the face of conflicting evidence. Religious claims are still falsifiable, but falsifiability is not the utmost test of meaningfulness. Religious statements are non-cognitive so their meaning is not determined by whether they are falsifiable. Religious statements can be given criteria of falsifiability.

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