

Starters and Plenaries for Component 1: Philosophy of Religion

For A Level Year 2 OCR
Religious Studies

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Teacher's Introduction

This resource contains 18 starters and plenaries which cover all topics of Year 2 of the A Level Philosophy of Religion paper for OCR, first examination 2017/18.

The activities are intended to help a student develop the abilities in the full range of assessment criteria.

AO1	AO2
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teachinginfluence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societiescause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practiceapproaches to the study of religion and belief	Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

The activities follow the specification order and give the teacher a clearly defined structure to work from.

The starter activities offer a way to grab the students' attention prior to learning the core information of the specification. The plenaries help to challenge the students, testing their understanding. While each activity is specified as either a starter or a plenary in the resource, these are adaptable to the teacher's needs.

The wide range of activities helps to stimulate each student's interest, by offering fresh and enjoyable methods of learning. The activities help to promote discussion, explanation, application and critical thinking skills, meaning that each student can learn to deeply analyse the information that they have been taught, which gives them a solid foundation from which to work for the following lessons. The activities target each type of learner, enabling every student to benefit from this resource.

July 2017

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Specification Cross-Reference

This table will enable you to pick and choose starters or plenaries relevant to what you are teaching. While each activity has been selected as either a starter or a plenary, it is noted that many starter and plenary tasks may be interchangeable depending on the specification. Some may not work so well as a starter or plenary. It is up to you when to use each task.

Area	Topic	Activities
Theological and Philosophical Developments	The Nature or Attributes of God	Do you Have the Power? Knowledge Goodness Eternity Factors Affecting Freedom
Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic	Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic	The Via Negativa You Can't Say That! The Cataphatic Way Using Language Decoding Symbols Defined by Symbols
Religious Language: Twentieth Century Perspectives	Twentieth Century Perspectives on Religious Language Philosophical Comparisons	Verify Me! Verifications of the Verifiable A Language Game Decoding a Text Writing an Essay Joining the Falsification Hare's Blinks

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Overview of Activities

Some activities may require scissors. Other than that, any extra materials are noted for the activity. All activities should take between 10 and 15 minutes.

Activity	Number	Type	Aim
Do You Have the Power?	1	Linking exercise between the everyday and philosophy	To consider limits to power
Knowledge	2	Identify correct or incorrect statements	Understanding limitations of knowledge
Goodness	3	Ranking exercise	To consider whether goodness is objective or subjective
Eternity	4	Sorting activity	To understand how eternal differs from mortal and immortal
Factors Affecting Free Will	5	Pairs activity with class discussion	To consider whether free will is possible
The Via Negativa	6	A Taboo-like group activity	To try to say something without saying it directly
You Can't Say That!	7	Understanding taboo topics	To understand why some topics are difficult to talk about
The Cataphatic Way	8	Inventing analogies	To understand the power of analogy to make something complex easy to understand
Using Language	9	Comprehension and lateral thinking	To understand the use or misuse of words
Decoding Symbols	10	Identifying symbols	To understand the use of symbols instead of words and potential misunderstandings
Defined by Symbols	11	Creative labelling	To perform some self-analysis

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Activity	Number	Type	Aim	Staple
Verify Me!	12	Analysing truth statements	To test the verification principle	
Limitations of the Verification Principle	13	Analysing truth statements	To understand the difference between successful and meaningful	
A Language Game	14	Analysing technical writing	To understand we are all involved with language games	
Decoding a Text	15	Comprehension and key word revision	Understanding the game you have learned in class	
Writing an Essay	16	Essay analysis and planning	Understanding exam technique and following argument threads	
Joining the Falsification Symposium	17	Writing a parable	Revision of religious language topic	
Hare's Bliks	18	Analysing Hare's example	To understand communism better	

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Theological and Philosophical Development

Activity 1 – Teacher's notes

Notes

The task is designed to show how we are able to 'use our own power' when doing a thing to do, but how as a species it is much harder to achieve. It then leads to the question of power or not.

Answers

Humans can do these things (individually and collectively), but whether or not it is a good matter.

The reasons given might include fear of punishment, because you would (n)ot be able to do it for the benefit of future humans, for personal or corporate gain. Every individual in the whole does have the ability to work towards these things.

When discussing God, the concepts of free will and goodness will almost certainly arise.

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Activity 1 – Do You Have the Power?

In the following list of actions, carefully assess whether you have the power to do it, whether humanity as a whole has the power or ability to perform the action, and whether you do it (or not).

Action	Can you?	Do you?	Can humanity?	Is it right?
Eat healthily				
Exercise regularly				
Kill other humans				
Help the poor				
Protect the environment				
Bully minorities				

What are the main reasons for limiting our own power?
Would these reasons also apply to God?

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Answers

Knowledge

- i. Correct. Known through the country declaring it to the world.
- ii. Correct. Known through empirical evidence from experimentation.
- iii. Incorrect. The Moon is the main cause. Again, known through empirical experimentation.
- iv. Incorrect unless someone very dramatic is happening right now. Knowledge is not observed.
- v. Incorrect. It should read might instead of will unless you believe they have knowledge of it.
- vi. Correct it would be hoped and assuming you accept their words and Complete certainty would only be achieved if you could know their past.
- vii. Incorrect. The internal angles add up to 180° and we can know this from geometry.
- viii. Could be either right or wrong depending on a host of factors including conditioning/state, and your feelings. Knowledge might be through direct experience.
- ix. Commonly held to be correct but might depend on whether you have been influenced by others.
- x. The student may have suggested either option and then given any other reason for this course.
- xi. Incorrect. It always has, but to claim it will tomorrow relies on knowledge of the future similar to v.

It is not possible to know all of the answers unless you can have knowledge of the future. Someone who believes in fate or predestination might claim this.

Extension

The answer to this is dependent on whether the omniscient being is inside or outside of the nature of the universe itself. Knowledge of the future also depends on free will. If there is no free will, can you really predict what they will do before they choose it?

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Activity 2 – Knowledge

The following list of statements claim **knowledge** of something. Some of them are true (and some are false knowledge statements).

Statement (correct it if it is incorrect)	How do you know whether it is correct?	
Budapest is the capital of Hungary.		
Gravity makes things fall to the ground.		
The stars are the main cause of the tides.		
Your school is on fire.		
You will become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.		
Your parents care about you.		
A triangle has three sides and internal angles that add up to 360°.		
Murder is wrong.		
The Mona Lisa has a mysterious smile.		
God exists.		
The Sun will rise in the morning.		

Extension

Does being all knowing (omniscient) imply you know the future?

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Activity 3 – Teacher's notes

Notes

The task is straightforward but should raise questions about how we judge objective?

It should enable students to understand their own view and see that of others

Answers

An examples of a reason:

Telling the truth is more important than being polite because politely lying

Giving a homeless person a cup of tea is better than helping a struggling student as a person has fewer people that will support and help them.

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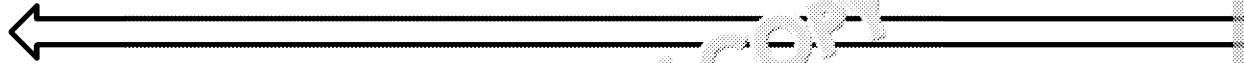


Activity 3 – Goodness

Rank the following examples of 'good' actions on the continuum. In the space below the line, on the left, ignoring all the others.

1. Helping a person cross the road.
2. Giving a homeless person a cup of tea.
4. Working as a volunteer.
5. Helping another student who is struggling with their work.
7. Doing what your teacher asks you to.
8. Speaking out when you see bullying.
10. Being polite.

Least Good



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Activity 4 – Teacher's notes

Notes

This is a quick activity intended to help fix definitions in student minds. A lead on to further investigation.

Answers

The universe – Mortal

Humans – Mortal

God – Eternal

dogs – Mortal

DNA – Immortal – it can live forever in your descendants (Dawkins)

Earth – Mortal

Beauty – Eternal

Souls – Immortal

This school – Mortal

The works of Shakespeare – Immortal

Algebra – eternal

Geometry – eternal

Can you make a case for putting any of the terms into a different category?

The universe could be any category depending on which theories you believe.

God could arguably be put in immortal or eternal depending on whether or not he is inside or outside the universe.

Humans and souls might be mortal or immortal depending on your beliefs.

Extension – Do you think it is possible to comprehend eternity?

A point to consider here is that humans cannot see anything eternal making

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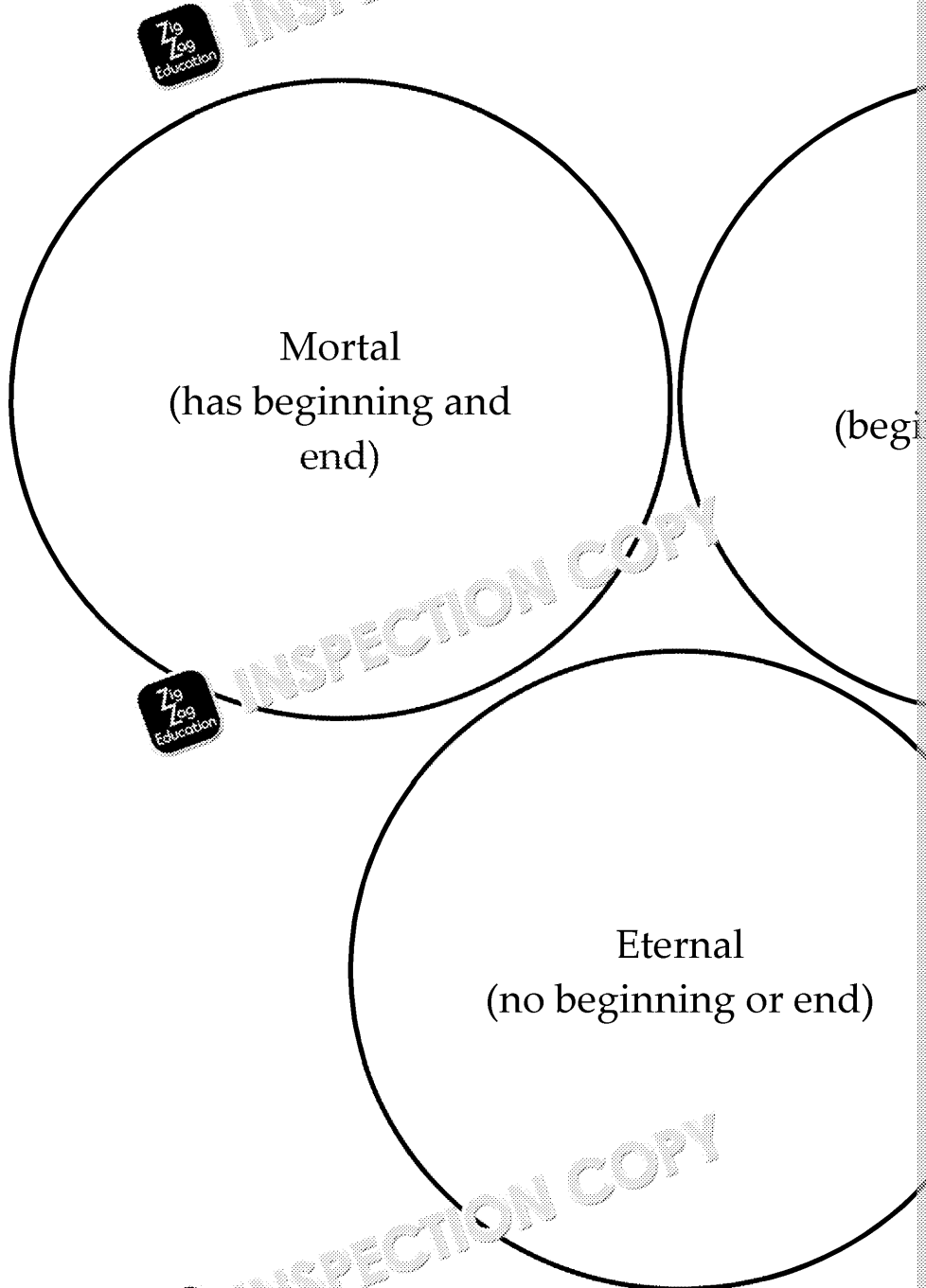


Activity 4 – Eternity

Sort the following into the three categories.

The universe	Humans	God	Dogs	D
Beauty	Souls	This school	The work of Shakespeare	

Can you make a case for putting any of the terms into a different category?



Extension

Do you think it is possible to comprehend eternity?

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Activity 5 – Teacher's notes

Notes

Cut out section for hat:

✂

Education	Economics/money	Upbringing	Genetics
Age	Society	Religion	War

Answers

Factors affecting free will

A selection of potential responses:

Factor	What might affect free will?	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifications for and knowledge of jobs Rules that must be followed Takes up time Potential pool of friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform Lesson lunch
Economics/money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expense of different activities Shared facilities for money Choice of schools Sense of clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horse Some
Upbringing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouragement in some areas Other people encountered Rules of the home Beliefs heard and observed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent to take Being for
Genetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Height limits for jobs/activities Athletic limitations Discrimination/prejudice from physical differences Disabilities prevent certain choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being Bullied colour
Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location based opportunities for work/sport Limited school choice Accessible resource Discrimination/prejudice War / threats to life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult climate Failing unemployment option
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prejudice/discrimination Cannot vote yet Not physically capable anymore Not allowed to access places/services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not be or old Cannot Cannot

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Factor	What might affect free will?	
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrimination against minorities Laws that must be followed Expectations of behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women Some Stealing
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes time Rules that should be followed Prejudice/discrimination Different expectations for some groups Exclusive (only a select group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunday Only certain
War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limits education or monetary wealth Different opportunities to peacetime Potential destruction of home Becoming a refugee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forced Hospital health
God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Omniscience Omnipotence Rules given to humanity Heaven/hell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known means Ten Commandments behaviour Consequences eternal

Student responses to the last question should weigh up the arguments then whether despite these limitations it is still possible.

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Activity 5 – Factors Affecting Free Will

Free will is the idea that a human being is able to choose their own actions.

Each pair will draw one of the following out of a hat. You will all have two discussion time to come up with ways that this factor might limit your free will. Share your ideas to the rest of the class, with examples to help their understanding.

Record all the responses in the table.

Factor	What might affect free will?	
Education		
Economics/money		
Upbringing		
Genetics		
Geography		
Age		
Society		
Religion		
War		
God		



Do you believe it is possible to have free will?
Give reasons for your answer.

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Religious Language: Negative, Analogical

Activity 6 – Teacher's notes

Notes:

Cut out the following sections and place them in a box or similar receptacle. Then the students should take turns in drawing a concept out of the hat and attempting to describe it without using the prohibited words or any actions.

This is intended to show the via negative is possible but has limitations. It should work like a team variation of the board game Taboo.

Resurrection

Other forbidden words – birth, death, crucifixion, Lazarus, Jesus

Eternal

Other forbidden words – immortal, mortal, everlasting, forever

God

Other forbidden words – deity, dualism, materialism, immaterial

Truth

Other forbidden words – right, wrong, lie, untrue, correct

Form

Other forbidden words – Plato, Aristotle, soul, reality

Evil

Other forbidden words – Epicurus, Nietzsche, Mackie, Augustine, Immanuel Kant, absence, privation, evil, Hitler

TO READ OUT:

You will each in turn draw a concept from the hat. You have to get your word with the word OR any other words mentioned on the piece. You can use gestures or any other English versions of words and no pointing to anything on the board. If a word has been guessed, the next person in your team (going clockwise) takes a turn. The first team to get six words wins.

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Activity 6 – The Via Negativa or Apophatic

Saying something without saying can be tricky. We've all tried to avoid saying what we want to or tried to discuss something without others listening in.

You will each in turn draw out a concept from the hat. You have to get your word without using the word OR any other words mentioned on the piece of paper. You can use gestures or non-English versions of words, but no pointing to anything on the paper. If a word has been guessed, the next person on your team (going clockwise) takes a turn. The first team to guess six words wins.



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Activity 7 – Teacher's notes

Notes

The task aims to show that the via negativa is not just about saying nothing understanding God through what God is not. For the subjects here, not talking about them means no understanding is gained.

Answers

Death

People fear death of themselves and have often been really upset by the death of loved ones.

Sex

It is seen as private, impolite or disgusting by many people. It might give a false impression of people.

Money

Seen as a private affair. Source of shame and jealousy about who can 'provide' for their family.

Religion

People often have very strong opinions about the faiths of others but avoid discussing them for fear of ignorance or wanting to start arguments.

Mental Illness

People don't understand them. They have been stigmatised. People don't want to be associated with it prejudices others.

Disability

People like to avoid thinking of 'unpleasant' things. They tend to be pitied instead of being seen as individuals embarrassed by not understanding from their own person's perspective.

Menstruation

Stigmatised and not understood by many, especially those historically in power.

God

People often have very strong opinions and nothing is scientifically verifiable.

You will have different opinions about whether we should discuss these subjects in class.

God is different because God's very existence is something which is disputed. It is not undeniably real. Also, if God exists, then God is the only sentient being on earth.

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Activity 7 – You Can't Say That!

The medieval Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides believed that we couldn't know about God because it was impossible to know about a being who was beyond or completely different from us.

The following is a list of taboo topics (including God). Explain why some people might be taboo about them.

Death



Sex

Money

Religion

Mental Illness

Disability



Menstruation

God



Do you agree?
Why is God different?

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Activity 8 – Teacher's notes

Answers

The students should feel free to be very creative on this task and may come up with many different answers. Two other possible answers could be 'God is like the air' – all are essential for sustaining life or 'God is like my mother' – caring and forgiving but also angry when they are broken.

Extension

Yes, but in a very limited way, and they tend to anthropomorphise God.



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Activity 8 – The Cataphatic Way


Also known as the *via positiva*, the Cataphatic way suggests we can know God through analogies. Thomas Aquinas was one such person who believed this.


Write down four of your own analogies in the boxes provided. An example is provided. At the end, decide which analogy from your class is the most effective and

 The Sun – Full of warmth and gives us light.
Banishes darkness.
Essential for life on Earth.
Incredibly powerful.

God is like.....







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Extension

Are these analogies good at describing God?

Activity 9 – Teacher's notes

Notes

The activity is designed help students consider whether the language they

Answers

Word	Type	Meaning
Car	Univocal	A wheeled vehicle with an engine and a relatively small number of people.
Nail	Equivocal	The hard section at the end of the finger to hold something in place or a verb to fasten something successfully.
Season	Equivocal	A section of the year and something that is added to food.
Cat	Univocal	A feline creature.
Bow	Equivocal	An old weapon, an action you perform to launch a ship, something to go in your hair or a knot you lace into.
Hatch	Equivocal	A type of entrance portal and what comes out of the egg.

Extension:

Aquinas rejects univocal language because it can lead to anthropomorphise God or an object in the world.

He rejects equivocal language because if what we say about God can have a different meaning then we can say nothing about God.

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Activity 9 – Using Language

Thomas Aquinas said there were three types of significant language; univocal, equivocal and analogical.

In the table below, decide whether the word is univocal (consistently used in the same way), equivocal (used in more than one entirely different meaning) and give the meaning.

Word	Univocal	Equivocal	Meaning
 Car			
Nail			
Season			
 Car			
Bow			
Hatch			

Extension

Why did Aquinas reject both of these as ways of talking about God?

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Activity 10 – Teacher's notes

Notes

Most of these symbols should be familiar to the students but those with a different meaning should provide a discussion about univocal symbols for more than one thing should provide a discussion about univocal symbols.

Answers

1. Bread and wine / the Eucharist – symbol of Christ's sacrifice / Christ's blood.
2. Thumbs up – symbol expressing things are good.
3. The trinity – symbol expressing the mystery of the Christian concept of God.
4. The cross – symbol of Jesus defeating death and rising again.
5. Danger sign – symbol advising caution in a place.
6. The Wheel of Dhamma – symbol of the Noble Eightfold Path.
7. The Aum – symbol for the sound of creation and also used by Hindus. Also seen in other Eastern faiths.
8. The All-seeing Eye – symbol of the mythical Illuminati conspiracy and seen as the Eye of Providence (God's eye) on money in the US.
9. The cross of St Peter – Christian image of an inverted cross symbolising those who have been crucified. Sometimes used by those wishing to have an 'anti-crucifix'.
10. The crucifix – symbol of Jesus's death for humankind.
11. The cross of St George – flag of England and other places with St George. Contentious use by English nationalists and racists.
12. Copyright – symbol showing that a piece of work is protected by law, especially for monetary gain.

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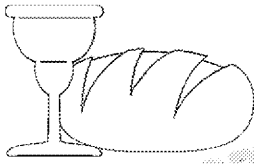
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Activity 10 – Decoding Symbols

What do each of these symbols represent?

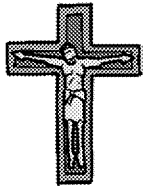
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2.



4.



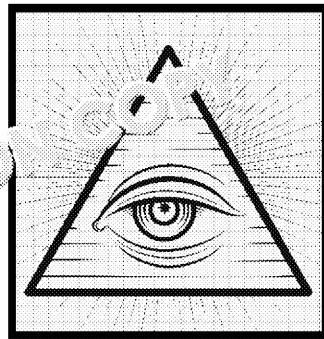
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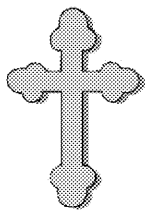
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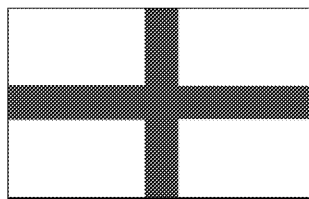
8.



10.



11.



Do any of them have more than one meaning or a contentious meaning?
Which ones?

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Activity 11 – Teacher's notes

Answers

The Pope could have any number of symbols associated with the Vatican, the papal tiara, a crucifix, the keys of St Peter, the Eucharist.

The activity gives the students a chance to develop their self-awareness with language.

Sometimes symbols can be useful in naming and describing things, but not include that complexity cannot always be simply expressed.



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Activity 11 – Defined by Symbols

Paul Tillich thought that all theological language was symbolic.

Can you define yourself entirely by symbols?

Try to define the Pope by symbols alone.



Now try yourself. Pick up to five and draw them below.

They might include: clothing brands, sports teams, costumes or games, religious symbols, etc.



Are symbols a good way of defining or describing things? What potential problems are there?

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Religious Language: Twentieth Century F

Activity 12 – Teacher's notes

Answers

1. **God exists.**
Meaningless. God is not material or energy therefore cannot be verified.
2. **God does not exist.**
Meaningless. Same reason as above.
3. **Christians believe that Jesus died for their sins.**
Meaningful. We can ask them.
4. **Jesus had a beard.**
Meaningful. Historically verifiable – we know how to verify, but we lack evidence.
5. **Jesus physically rose from the dead.**
Meaningful. Same as above.
6. **Dave believes in God**
Meaningful. You can ask him.
7. **All Christians wear crosses.**
Meaningful. We can look at them all. Just because it isn't true doesn't make it meaningless.
8. **All emeralds are green.**
Meaningful. We could go and ask them all.
9. **Jesus died for the sins of humankind.**
Meaningless. This is a statement of belief which cannot be scientifically verified.
10. **Human activity is causing climate change.**
Meaningful. This can be tested by environmental scientists.
11. **Murder is wrong.**
Meaningless. Moral facts are unsubstantiated opinion.

You may have noticed that many of the statements about religion as fact are not verifiable. Religious believers believe it is verifiable.

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Activity 12 – Verify Me!

Logical Positivism tries to specify the conditions under which a proposition speaking world, this was popularized by A. J. Ayer.

Using Kant's definitions of propositions, there are two types of propositions:
Verification Principle:

- **Analytic propositions:** statements whose truth or falsehood is determined by words in the statement, such as definitions, and truths of mathematics. They cannot tell us anything about something's existence in the physical world. They are solely a matter of language, for example, 'a triangle has three sides'; or '2 plus 2 equals 4'.
- **Synthetic propositions:** must be verifiable through some form of empirical observation. All 'substantial' knowledge is empirical knowledge. An example would be 'the cat is on the mat'.

All other statements are meaningless.

Consider the following 10 sentences. Are they meaningful or meaningless?

1. God exists.
2. God does not exist.
3. Christians believe that Jesus died for their sins.
4. Jesus had a beard.
5. Jesus physically rose from the dead.
6. Dave believes in God
7. All Christians wear crosses.
8. All emeralds are green.
9. Jesus died for the sins of humankind.
10. Human activity is causing climate change.
11. Murder is wrong.

What do you think about the statements regarding religion?

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Activity 13 – Teacher's notes

Notes

The aim of this task is to make sure meaning and usefulness have been separated.

Answers

Only statements 1 and 5 are meaningful, yet all of them are useful in some way.

Students are often stuck in the mind-set that something must have physical basis, yet we find truths in mathematics and claim knowledge of right and wrong without knowledge of any facts.

The biographies of Alexander the Great were written nearly 200 years after his death, so they are not factual and if we discount economic theories then the world will undoubtedly be a better place.

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Activity 13 – Limitations of the Verification

These statements all convey some knowledge.

Which are meaningful by the verification principle?

Does that mean the others are useless and should be discarded?

1. The statement '2 and 2 equals 4.'
2. Mark Rothko lets us understand and feel what it is like to be depressed in his artwork.
3. Alexander the Great was an amazing general who founded 70 cities and was defeated in battle.
4. Stealing is wrong.
5. Earth is smaller than the sun.
6. If a country experiences an economic boom, then a bust must surely follow.

How relevant are each of these statements to the verification principle?

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Activity 14 – Teacher's notes

Notes

The aim of this task is for the students to link their philosophy work to some of the key texts.

The teacher could read the opening section out loud and ask if any of the students can identify the key texts.

The task could be expanded to include the whole class if students were comfortable with the task.



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Activity 14 – A Language Game

As a swing bowler, I mostly try to get the ball to move away from the batsman by time shining the ball to create the desired swing. My main method of taking the batsman edges to the wicketkeeper or slips or silly fielders but I hit the point and short leg for bat-pad catches and a long leg for when the batsman mistimes a hook from a bounce. When the ball doesn't swing, I find myself getting the batsman trapped behind the wicket or even bowled.



If you are reading this and don't know anything about cricket, the above passage is all. The text is full of words that are specific to the sport or have a specific meaning.

- Swing bowling makes the ball curve through the air as it travels towards the batsman.
- Wicketkeeper, slips, gully, silly point, short leg and long leg are all places on the pitch.
- A hook is a shot when the batsman attempts to hit a ball above his chest height in a horizontal motion.
- Caught, leg before wicket and bowled are some of the ways a batsman can be out.

A full explanation could take some time.

For Wittgenstein, a language game is the use of certain words and phrases in a particular context, like 'short leg' in the cricket example above. In order to follow the rules. Language games are useful for describing ideas quickly.

Your task is to write about a game, sport, pastime or other activity you enjoy. Your description with as many technical words as you can. You will then pass it to a friend and ask you to explain the technical words or words they don't understand.



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Activity 15 – Teacher's notes

Notes

This task acts as both a consolidator with language games and as a piece of evil.

Answers

Keywords found:

Evil – that which causes suffering. Seen as something immoral.

Absence of free will – the idea that evil is caused when there is an opportunity for good but it is not taken.

Free will – the ability to choose your own course of action, without interference.

Suffering – the result of evil. Undergoing pain, hardship or distress.

Omniscient – attribute of being all knowing.

Omnipresent – attribute of being everywhere.

Omnipotent – attribute of being all powerful.

Omnibenevolent – attribute of being all good.

Inconsistent triad – this is an expression of the problem of evil and states that for these three statements to all be true – they are inconsistent with each other.

1. God is omnipotent
2. God is omnibenevolent
3. Evil exists

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Activity 15 – Decoding a Text

There are at least nine keywords or specialist terms from the course in the work. Language has meaning, but sometimes it needs to be explained for meaning of a sentence. Find the terms and explain them so a beginner might first example is found for you.

Evil can be viewed as the absence of good or the product of misguided production which causes suffering. Suffering is a type of physical or mental being is forced to endure. The problem of evil postulates that if the omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, such suffering is physical proof of the existence of evil so therefore using this reasoning that God does not exist. This argument is known as the inconsistent triad theists are forced to face.

Terms found	Explanation
Evil	That which causes suffering

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Activity 16 – Teacher's notes

Notes

You will need a copy of the exam board marking criteria for this task. The individually or in pairs.

Answers

Things to look for:

- Are technical terms and names spelled correctly? Wittgenstein's name
- Is the material relevant to the question? Yes, though it is not wide
- Does the answer focus on the question or does it feel generic? It focus
- Are the scholarly or academic views suitable? Yes, but there are very
- Has the material been developed or simply stated? The material is rea shows a good understanding.

Extension:

There are many ways this essay could be finished. Here is an example that students to assess.

'Wittgenstein's famous example: 'if a lion could speak, we could not understand' is a controversial statement as it was criticised by the famous conservationist John Aspinall, who had 'clearly not spent much time with lions'. What Wittgenstein means by this and the context a lion lives are so disparate from our own wants and needs that the concept is completely incomprehensible. However, as Aspinall says, 'the idea that we are unable to find communication impossible is a contradiction of Darwinian evolutionary theory which supports an integral discontinuity' between us and the rest of the animal kingdom. The contradiction highlights a flaw in Wittgenstein's concept in that, by the use of language games, we are able to communicate effectively with people in different contexts and are not isolated from each other.

In conclusion although Wittgenstein's notion is significant and carries interesting ideas about the idea of language only having meaning in use and that language by itself is meaningless. Criticisms that show it is not completely fool proof and is subject to contradictions and weaknesses. The arguments put forward by the Vienna Circle (the logical positivists) show that Wittgenstein's theory is not completely applicable, although it does contain some valid conclusions.'

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Activity 16 – Writing an Essay

Below you will see the start of an answer to the question

‘Assess the strengths and weaknesses of Wittgenstein’s language games’.

Read it through and assess it using the exam board marking criteria.

Things to look for:

- Are technical terms and names spelt correctly?
- Is the material used relevant to the question?
- Does the answer focus on the question or does it feel generic?
- Are there a range of academic views suitable?
- Has the material been developed or simply stated?

During the later period of his life Ludwig Wittgenstein worked on a philosophical concept known as ‘language games’, rejecting the idea that language is in some way separate, and arguing concepts do not need to be clearly defined to be meaningful. ‘Language games’ suggest that language has particular meaning within separate social contexts; similarly to how different rules (hence language games), subsequently the way in which a statement is meaningful is determined by the context in which it occurs. Wittgenstein’s famous example was that, ‘if a lion could understand it’, by the rules of the language games this is because a lion has communication needs which is what allows us, as humanity, to understand each other: we are part of the same game.

Wittgenstein’s concept of language games allows the discussion of ideas that are not scientifically verifiable, for example love and the meaning of life. This can be seen as positive as there is the complexity of humanity, as we can understand each other when we talk about things that have not actually been defined or stated true. However, logical positivists, such as Ayer, who argued that language is confined to discussing what can be verified by human experience. This contradicts Wittgenstein’s argument that language can be used to discuss things beyond the realms of what we can experience, then we cannot understand them. Logical positivists could infer that the meaning of life and love are nonsense and cannot be proved. Wittgenstein subsequently attacked the logical positivists’ argument by arguing that language is not confined to discussing what can be verified by human experience. This contradicts Wittgenstein’s argument that language can be used to discuss things beyond the realms of what we can experience, then we cannot understand them. Logical positivists could infer that the meaning of life and love are nonsense and cannot be proved. Wittgenstein subsequently attacked the logical positivists’ argument by arguing that language is not confined to discussing what can be verified by human experience. This contradicts Wittgenstein’s argument that language can be used to discuss things beyond the realms of what we can experience, then we cannot understand them.

Another possible strength of Wittgenstein’s concept is that, through his reflection on the limitations of language, Wittgenstein came to the conclusion that scientific claims cannot be likened to religious claims as they are not part of the same language game. Therefore to directly compare religion and science if they were part of the same game would be to have a complete misunderstanding of both. Subsequently this eradicates competition between religious claims and scientific claims as they are no longer in conflict over the same theories; both are completely irrelevant to the other.

On the other hand, by making religion irrelevant as a theory, it is in conflict to science and religious believers. This is because someone who is a religious believer indefinitely believes in a creator and Wittgenstein’s language games are based on anti-realism, meaning that it suggests that there is no objective truth and that there is a God for the language of religion to be meaningful. One could see such a view as undermining Wittgenstein’s concept of language games as it gives an air of fantasy about the substantive metaphysical claims of religion, such as the existence of God, heaven, Jesus, the afterlife, etc. This view is also disagreed with by many believers as for them the Creator is a central piece in the complex language game.

Extension

Plan out how you would complete the essay.

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Activity 17 – Teacher's notes

Notes

The exercise is designed to give students a chance to creatively express their

They should ideally have already studied Flew, Hare, Mitchell and Aquinas. The exercise is designed to give students a chance to creatively express their understanding of the contributions of Flew, Hare and Mitchell to the philosophy of religion.

Answers

There should be a metaphor for God and the use of a few analogies in an attempt to explain the debate.

As Aquinas proposed using analogies, students may use some biblical examples. A version of the Blind men and the Elephant. If they are feeling clever, a poem about the debate and how different people understand it would be at an appropriate metaphor.

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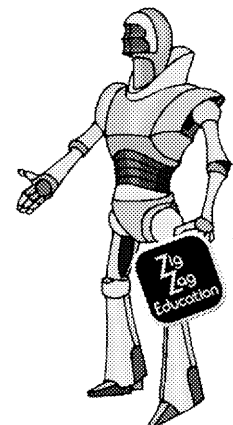
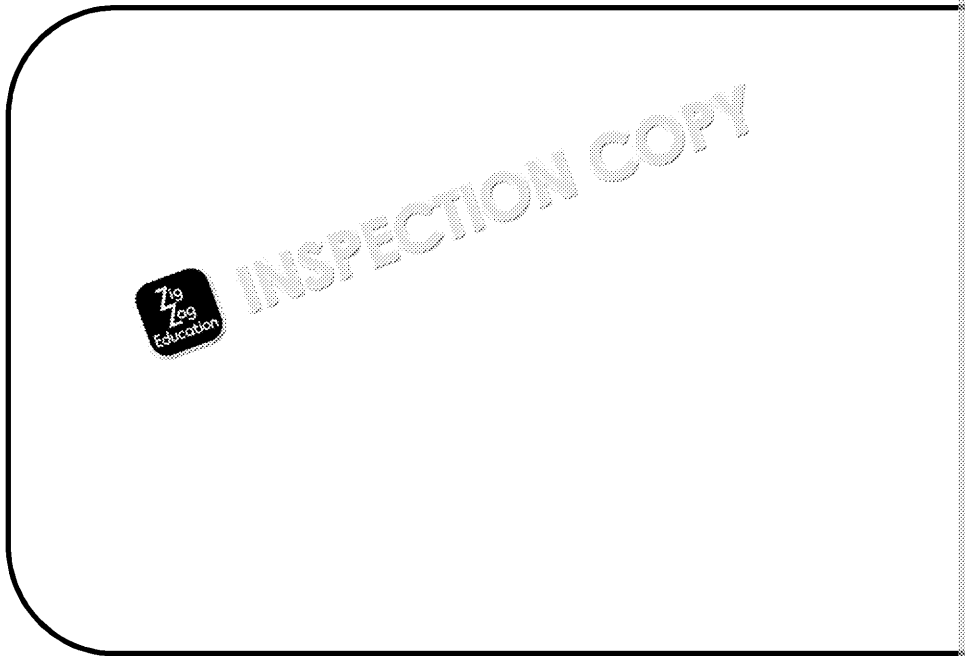
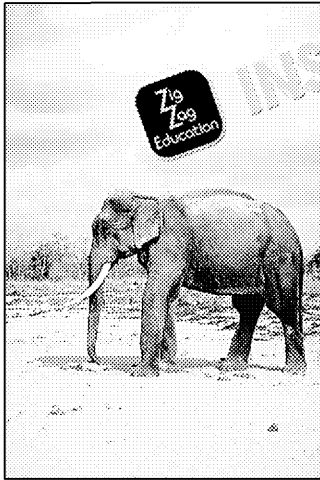
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Activity 17 – Joining the Falsification Sym

Anthony Flew, Richard Hare and Basil Mitchell all used parables in order to make points on whether talking about God was meaningful in any way.

Using at least one of the following four pictures, construct your own parable to challenge Thomas Aquinas on theological language.



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Activity 18 – Teachers Notes

Answers

Hare thinks that religious beliefs are not like assertions that can be shown to be true or false.

They form part of your world view. This is what he labels a 'blik'. In his example, the difference between Hare and his friend is paranoia. He will not accept evidence against his 'blik', but the difference between Hare and his friends is meaningful because it alters how they live.

A disagreement in blik's cannot be decided using empirical experience. But it is meaningful.

It is unclear whether Hare thinks religious language is cognitive or not.

Blik's can be true or false, which suggests that they are cognitive, BUT because Hare claims that they work more like attitudes or commitments than beliefs, they are non-cognitive.

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Activity 18 – Hare's Bliks

Read through R.M. Hare's 'Parable of the paranoid man'.

A certain lunatic is convinced that all dons want to murder him. His friends and most respectable dons that they can find, and after each of them has retold the story, he says, 'I know you don't really want to murder me; he spoke to me in a most cordial manner now?' But the lunatic replies, 'Yes, but then you know my diabolical cunning; the whole time, like the rest of them, I know it, I tell you.' However many kind reactions there are, the reaction is still the same.

(R.M. Hare, in David G. Ford and MacIntyre (eds), *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*)

This was a response to Anthony Flew's retelling of Wisdom's Parable of the blind men in the Jungle.

1. Explain how Hare is rejecting Flew's cognitivism.

2. Do you think Hare is proposing a non-cognitive view point?

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