



2016 specification
first exams in 2018

Course Companion for A Level Year 2 Edexcel

Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion

zigzageducation.co.uk

**POD
9368**

Publish your own work... Write to a brief...
Register at publishmenow.co.uk

Follow us on Twitter [@ZigZagRS](https://twitter.com/ZigZagRS)

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Thank You for Choosing ZigZag Education..... | ii |
| Teacher Feedback Opportunity..... | iii |
| Terms and Conditions of Use | iv |
| Teacher’s Introduction..... | 1 |
| 4 Religious Language..... | 2 |
| 4.1 Analogy and Symbol | 2 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 10 |
| 4.2 Verification and Falsification Debates | 11 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 17 |
| 4.3 Language Games | 18 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 22 |
| 5 Works of Scholars | 23 |
| 5.1 Context to Critiques of Religion and Points of Discussion | 23 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 31 |
| 5.2 Bertrand Russell vs Frederick Copleston..... | 32 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 37 |
| 6 Influences of Developments in Religious Beliefs | 38 |
| 6.1 Life after Death | 38 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 45 |
| 6.2 Points for Discussion about Life after Death | 46 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 51 |
| 6.3 Religion and Scientific Debates | 52 |
| <i>Quick Quiz</i> | 65 |
| Quick Quiz Answers | 66 |
| 4.1 Analogy and Symbol | 66 |
| 4.2 Verification and Falsification Debates | 66 |
| 4.3 Language Games..... | 67 |
| 5.1 Context to Critiques of Religious Belief | 67 |
| 5.2 Bertrand Russell vs Frederick Copleston..... | 68 |
| 6.1 Life after Death | 68 |
| 6.2 Points for Discussion about Life after Death | 69 |
| 6.3 Religion and Scientific Debates | 69 |

Teacher's Introduction

This resource provides concise and comprehensive coverage of Edexcel A Level Year 2 material for Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion. The material is covered in the order given in the specification:

- Religious language (Analogy and symbol, Verification and falsification debates, Language games)
- Works of scholars (Context to critiques of religious belief and Points for discussion; A comparison between a critic of religion, Bertrand Russell, and a religious believer, Frederick Copleston)
- Influences on developments (Views about life after death across a range of religious traditions, Points for discussion about life after death, Religion and science debates and their significance for philosophy of religion)

Each subtopic has 'Activities' in boxes, which are mostly questions for stimulating class discussion. There are also 'Exam Prep' boxes, which provide activities for directly preparing students for the exam.

Also included are 'Quick Quiz' sections throughout each topic, which should provide a fun way of checking comprehension and helping students remember key information. Answers for the Quick Quiz sections are provided at the back of the resource.

Key terms have been defined in boxes and highlighted in bold.

February 2019

Free Updates!

Register your email address to receive any future free updates* made to this resource or other RS resources your school has purchased, and details of any promotions for your subject.

* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

Go to **[zzed.uk/freeupdates](https://www.zzed.uk/freeupdates)**



4 RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Within the realm of philosophical or religious discussion, the way in which concepts are understood, and the understanding of the content which is being discussed. Language, and how it is used in discussion, will differ depending not only on what the topic of discussion is but also on the context in which it is used.

Within religious texts such as the Qur'an and the Bible there is a recurrent theme: that any human language, and any human dialect – our words and our Scriptures, cannot do him justice. Indeed, for those who do not believe in God, the question of who and what God or gods is/are and what he or she or they could be has such rich variety within belief systems that it is almost an impossible feat to put all of these things in words. It can end up getting lost in the words of Wittgenstein:



Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our senses.

What issues, then, does this bring up when one is faced with the problem of discussing religion in a philosophical context?

This is the issue beyond the arguments about the existence of God themselves; it is the issue of how we discuss these issues – the words we use and the way in which we use them.

We encounter the issue of **cognitive** and **non-cognitive** statements.

Cognitive statements are those which are truth-evaluable, as in they have truth conditions; they can be as meaningfully true or false. For example, if someone makes a statement such as 'There is a God', you should enquire about the truth of this statement, as it could be incorrect, in the same way that 'Devon' is incorrect. Therefore, it makes sense to enquire about the truth of this statement.

Non-cognitive statements are not truth-evaluable, and as such do not have truth conditions. They may, for example, be statements of approval or sentiment, which are not direct beliefs. For example, 'Where is Devon?' is a non-cognitive statement as it does not make logical sense to enquire whether or not this statement is true. It can neither be true nor untrue, as it does not have a truth value; therefore, it does not make sense to enquire whether or not it is true or false.



4.1 Analogy and Symbol

Analogy and symbolism are two of the key aspects of religious language which are discussed in the discussion of religion. Analogy is one of the key tools used by those on both sides of the debate to attempt to explain their point of view to the other in a way in which they will understand. One of the uses of analogy within the realm of religious discussion is William Paley's watch and the teleological argument. There is an importance within the discussion of the use of analogy and whether the analogy itself is a sound analogy.

Symbolism within religions themselves is a key part of religious life; symbols are used in the discussion of religion and within the participation of religious life. There is a distinction between symbols and signs, which will be discussed.



INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1953

Analogy

Analogy is the use of comparison between two dissimilar or similar things towards a separate concept. This is one of the methods used to explain belief in God. A good example of this has been used to explain belief in God is shown in the below quote by C.S. Lewis.

*I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because it is the only way in which life is possible.*²

Here, God is compared to sunlight as the way through which life is illuminated. It is less based on evidential proof but more on the way in which it impacts life. Less on the way in which Christianity puts him in the perspective which supports his religious belief and more on the way in which it works within the world.

Aristotle discussed his opinion on analogy regarding his theory of similarity, which theory was that if two things share a common attribute, then what may be true for one thing may be true for the other. They are alike insofar as they share that common attribute. Within his theory, he listed four different methods of judging analogies, or four factors which will affect the way in which an analogy is. These are as follows:

1. The strength of an analogy is dependent on how similar the two things which are being compared are.
2. He argues that similarities within analogies can be found only in things which are similar in some way.
3. Sound analogies will have a strong common denominator.
4. Good arguments or analogies do not rely on assumed knowledge regarding the things being compared.

Other important terminology when discussing analogy within theology or philosophy is **via negativa** and **via positiva**.

The **via negativa**, also known as negative theology or the apophatic way, is the idea that the only way to describe God is by saying what he is not. It is the language to effectively describe God as God goes beyond any human understanding. We cannot make positive assertions about God, but we are able to make assertions about what we do not know from this.

Via positiva, also known as the cataphatic way, is somewhat the opposite. It posits that we can understand elements of God by the way in which the Scriptures describe him. For example, if the Scriptures tell us God is good, we are told so and we understand the concept of goodness.

For example, we cannot conclusively say that God is good because our understanding of goodness is limited to a human level. We cannot know God or conclusively make statements about God. Our discussion of these things are human words with human understandings, and God is beyond our human understandings of these concepts. God is ineffable (beyond the scope of human understanding).

Ideas of the ineffability of God are present in many of the world's major religions. In Judaism, the name of God is too holy to be spoken by human words and within human understanding is omitted – 'Yahweh' becomes 'Y-hw-h'. In much the same way, within Islam depicting the Prophet Muhammad (the much-respected central figure of Islam) are not allowed. The via negativa fit well with the religious practices of such faiths and with the ideas behind them.

There is biblical basis for this idea including such verses as 1 Corinthians 2:11 ESV:

For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of the person, which is in him? So no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

So where does this theory come from?

These ideas are found in the earliest within mystical writings and Early Eastern Christianity. One of the earliest is **Clement of Alexandria**, for example. Similar themes of the idea of via negativa are present in the work of such philosophers as **Origen**, **Basil the Great**, **Gregory of Nyssa**, and **Plotinus**. Indeed, in the later fourteenth century, ideas of the via negativa appear in the work of **Thomas Aquinas** and **John Duns Scotus**. In the sixteenth century, the idea of **Unknowing**, which states:

² *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The first time when you seek God, you find only a darkness and as it were, a cloud and this cloud is, whatever you do, between you and your God and...you may [not have] understanding in your reason.³

At the beginning of the sixth century, **Dionysius the Aeropagite** (named though almost likely been a Syrian Christian philosopher) made a distinction between the two theologies, thereby giving a name to the ideas which had been circulating. While he posits basic understanding of God through the use of theological terminology (for the negative posits that this established understanding is a basic one. The nature of God is beyond, and, therefore, these words can only provide a basic understanding of God which is beyond. The terms we use are useful insofar as they give us an idea of God but they are not God.

Moses Maimonides also picks up upon these ideas. He was an incredibly important Jewish thinker. A Jewish scholar, he had a high level of knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. He specifically singles out the issue of anthropomorphising God as something to be avoided in theological discussion. This issue will be touched upon later. Within his work *The Guide for the Perplexed*, he examines the concept of via negativa, stating:

Because man's distinction lies in having something which no other earthly creature has... this perception has been compared – though only apparently, not as a perception, which requires no bodily organ. For this reason – because of the divine light given – he said to be in the image and likeness of the Almighty. But we should not think that Being is corporeal, having a material body⁴

Maimonides explained this idea using the example of a ship. By making statements about a ship, we can gain an understanding about what it is. For example, if we say a ship does not fly, we gain knowledge that it sails on another substance. If we say that it does not sail on air, we gain the idea that it sails on water.

Aquinas and Analogy

St Thomas Aquinas, writer of *Summa Theologica*, also puts forwards ideas regarding the use of analogy within philosophy of religion. He was very familiar with the ideas of Maimonides. He puts forward his Doctrine of Analogy that human language can never fully capture the nature of God. Our words are flawed and we can never be able to adequately describe God. Analogy, he argues, does help. Many of Aquinas' ideas are similar and, given that he did have a large understanding of and familiarity with Maimonides', it is highly likely he had a good knowledge of the via negativa.

It should be stressed, however, that he was not a specific advocate of the via negativa because statements about God are beyond human understanding it does not mean that statements cannot be made or have no meaning. Only negative statements about God can be said to be true according to Aquinas; we can only say things which God is not, and beyond this any positive statement about God is what God is. However, positive statements, within his thought, still have meaning.

So we can see that many philosophers and theologians have posited that the via negativa is a useful language regarding God – but what are the criticisms? Examples of criticisms from the 20th century are as follows:

- That the approach does not garner a meaningful discussion about God and his nature. To state that God is beyond all human works within the logic of the via negativa means that there is no valuable contribution towards discussions of God's nature.
- G K Chesterton (1897–1936) and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) both argued against the via negativa. As theists, they argued that the physical world was created by God and use was also created by God, and was intended by him to point towards himself.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



³ *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Anonymous, late fourteenth century

⁴ *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides), 1190

Therefore, by being unable to use these words to discuss God, you are disabling yourself.

- W R Inge argues that the via negativa poses a danger to theists and Christians. If you cannot fully capture God to being useless, you risk the loss of connection between the language with which you can describe humans and reducing the descriptions of God effectively to nothing, it makes it increasingly difficult to have a discussion at all.
- Brian Davies argues against Maimonides, and in favour of Aquinas, by arguing that if an entity is not given you no information about what it is. In his view there is nothing that does not stand up to scrutiny.

The conclusion many philosophers appears to be that a balanced understanding of God should include awareness of both the via negativa and the via positiva. Aquinas posited that if we use to describe God can never fully capture God does not mean that it has not been captured into three categories in order to convey his thoughts regarding religious language.

- Univocal
- Equivocal
- Analogous

Univocal language: this is language that means the same thing regardless of the context. The word does not change depending on the description or situation of the word. For example, 'red'. They are both the colour red, despite the context being different as hair and paper are both red.

Those discussing God within a religious context may encounter the issue of **anthropomorphism**, the concept of giving human characteristics or attributes to non-human entities; this is often done as people use analogy or symbolism to explain their ideas about God. To ascribe human characteristics to God limit God to the human abilities. It is also inconsistent with the differences between God and humans.

Equivocal language: this is language or a term which can have more than one meaning, or a double meaning, for example. This represents a word whose meaning changes depending on the context in which it is used. Within discussions outside of philosophy, these words are known as homonyms. For example, this would be the word 'bark'. In one context this could mean the wooden bark which covers a tree, but in another context this could mean the sharp noise made by a dog in order to call attention to itself. This is the same word, with different meaning depending on the context. Within another language there would not be such confusion – for example, within German these words are 'Baumrinde' (tree bark) and 'Bellen' (dog's bark), between which there would be no issue.

Attribution is a further philosophical word issue which is attributed to Aquinas (although the school of thought who attribute this idea to Thomas Catjan in 1469). It posits that we can find commonalities and that we can ascertain things about the maker by looking at the world, and everything in it, according to Aquinas. Therefore, there must be commonalities between the universe and God. To illustrate his view, Aquinas uses a fairly unpleasant but effective example of a bull.

If you were to examine the urine of a bull, you would be able to attribute various characteristics to the bull. You would be able to tell whether or not the bull is in good health, how hydrated he is, etc. If you were to examine the bull would be reduced to a number of characteristics – this much is obvious.

Therefore, Aquinas argues that in much the same way we can observe elements of the natural world and derive ideas about God. If there is beauty to be found in the natural world, then we can attribute this beauty to the creator of this natural world.

With this issue there arises another – the significance of **proportional similarities** or analogies. The things which are compared within the analogies have to be proportional to each other, logically, in order for the analogy to make the point that it desires to make. The question arises: how can we be known whether analogical language is being used correctly in describing God?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



assumption of attribution is just that – an assumption – which when arguing about a mistake to make in positing an argument.

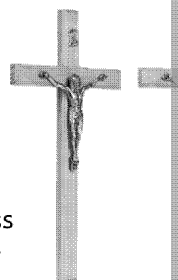
For example, some people argue that the analogy posited by Paley is too dissimilar to work – the watch is a man-made object of technology. It is made of metal. The world, to which Paley compares the watch, is organic. It changes and grows itself, whereas the watch does not. In this way, some people argue that the two things are too dissimilar for the analogy to successfully work.

EX
In your notes, evaluate Aquinas' theories regarding the existence of God.

Symbol

Physical symbols are a hugely important facet of religious life, practice and dialogue. Religions to which they refer are things of greater meaning.

For example, within Christianity the crucifix is a hugely important multifaceted symbol. At a basic level, all Christians will look to the crucifix as a symbol of their belief in the death of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross in the first century as sacrifice for their sins and through which they can receive forgiveness and resultantly attain entrance into heaven. Within Catholicism, the crucifix is often depicted with an image of Christ nailed to the cross as a signifier of their remembrance of his sacrifice. Notably, many Protestant churches will have the symbol of the cross empty. This symbolises the belief that Jesus rose again; the empty cross serves as a reminder that we remain dead but rose again to life and thus afforded forgiveness of sins.



Within Judaism, the Star of David is a hugely important religious symbol; it is named after an important and notable figure within Judaism, whose story is recorded within the Torah. While not always associated with Judaism, its most well-known associated use is in the 19th century CE the use of this symbol for the Jewish people. Since then, the use of this symbol for the Jewish people has come to indicate subjectivity, also nationhood, through the use of this symbol to subjugate Jews during the Holocaust and the use of this symbol to be part of the flag of the nation of Israel. It is declared the symbol of the Jewish people.

Philosopher **Paul Tillich** (1886–1965) laid a great emphasis within his own work on the importance of understanding how this works within religious language and the importance of understanding how this works within religion.

The theory which he posits is that religious language is symbolic in a specific way. However, we must first establish what is meant by the term 'symbol'.

Tillich argues they help people to open up to hidden levels of reality and understanding beyond literal language.

Tillich firmly draws a distinction between symbol and sign, two concepts that could be philosophical terms to be similar, but which Tillich wishes to assert as being different. A sign is a practical necessity which depicts something clearly; for example, a 'Give Way' sign tells you what to do. It has no purpose or meaning beyond the specific information it denotes.

A symbol, however, is completely different. It can point to a meaning beyond the literal it represents. For example, the American Flag. On a basic level, it symbolises the country of America. On an emotional level, for Americans, it symbolises what it means to be American. Every American can identify. Therefore, the Star of David, the example previously mentioned, helps people open up to hidden levels of reality and understanding beyond literal language.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Furthermore, Tillich points out that certain symbols have life cycles in that their meaning changes with time.

For example, to the right is the image of a skull and crossbones.

To modern onlookers, this symbol would generate meaning. In the minds of most this would conjure up memories of childhood – of stories and films filled with pirate ships sailed under the skull and crossbones. Rum, swash, bouting rogues intent on conquest and plundering, and perhaps a captain with a hook for a hand are all images that come to mind immediately. However, the use of this image to symbolise pirates and adventures has not always been the case. The image was first used in the twelfth century on flags to symbolise the fierce and dangerous nature of a particular fleet. It was not until the nineteenth century that it became firmly associated with pirates.

It has also come to represent death – there are skulls and crossbones engraved in gravestones. It does not symbolise their conquering by pirates, but rather the presence of graves. In fact, death is the very reason why the skull and crossbones was adopted by pirates. It symbolised death and danger – for example, it is common to place this symbol on a substance that has a high likelihood of killing someone should they come into contact with it.

The association that many children have with the skull and crossbones as being a symbol of death has led to concern that it has detracted from the seriousness of the use of this symbol. For young people raised with the idea of pirates within cartoons, this would have a different connotation and, therefore, there is potential for this symbol not to fulfil its desired purpose when coming into contact with the poisonous substance. Therefore, within the US, for example, efforts towards the use of another symbol ('Mr Yuk') have been made.

Clearly, we can see that meaningful symbols that we might see and automatically associate with death have other connotations that we might not think of or, in some cases, understand. The symbol representing the serious and deadly has become, for children's cartoons, conjuring up images of those encountering it, rather than the original serious connotations.

This same issue extends to the use of religious symbols. The understanding of symbols and their meaning is important to religious traditions in modern times and it is important to understand how they have changed.

For example, the biblical literary image used to equate God and Christ with a king has had a significant impact. Kings had boundless power; they were the ultimate authority in those times. In the context of modern Britain, our concept of the monarchy has drastically changed. The monarchy has lessened considerably – the Queen now functions as somewhat of a figurehead with power but it is a far cry from the absolute power of the rulers to which the Bible's tradition then, Tillich posits, there should be a change in the language that is used to denote symbols should be updated to reflect the changes in culture to help people understand the significance that they denote.



ACTIVITY

Come up with any examples you can for symbols which have undergone a meaning change over time.

Draw out each symbol and write down what the original meaning, and to the left, what the current meaning is.

What might the advantages or significance of these changes be?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



According to Tillich, religious language has many of the same traits as the symbol. A statement that a good example of the point which he is attempting to convey would be the statement 'God is Love'. This statement is not just a sign pointing to God, but also functions in the same way as a symbol. It is 'participation in the reality of God'. It is something more than simply pointing to God, it is a statement about God.

Tillich argues that the term is 'affirmed and negated' by God's reality. Should there be a description which Tillich is alluding to, then should he say 'surely he is love'. However, negatively, this is negated by the fact that the phrase 'God is Love' could fall far short of the reality it is posited.

There are, however, criticisms of this argument by Tillich. For example, John Hick

John Hick (1917–2012) takes issue and raises the question of what is truly meant by 'God is Love' and religious language 'participate in what [they] point to'. Tillich does not illuminate the phrase, so Hick questions this. He states that the participation does little towards showing what that participation constitutes. For Hick, Tillich's idea of symbols and symbols relativises religious belief – if symbols are to reveal some deeper understanding of God, then towards some fixed, meaningful idea, otherwise one might be participating in nothing.

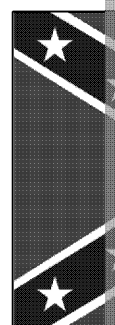
Furthermore, does the significance of something as a symbol change when used by someone who does not believe in it? A symbol does not have meaning? For example, should an atheist state that God is Love, does it have the same weight and importance? Surely an atheist does not believe or agree with this. Does it negate the importance of the symbol and change what the meaning of the symbol is? Or does it mean that on the lips of an atheist such a phrase would function as a sign, while on the lips of a believer it would function as a symbol?

Further issue lies within discussion of what God is like, as this line of thought cannot be used to describe a description or depiction of God one chooses. If we replace the phrase 'God is Love' with 'God is Spaghetti Monster' then the same logic applies. Therefore, we are left with limited value. This contributes to discussions on philosophy of religion.

Critique of Tillich's thought can also be found within the nature of symbols. 'Participation' in a symbol goes so far as to demonstrate that symbols work within the mind. It does not necessarily speak of the existence of the symbol as pointing to reality outside the mind. For example, the Southern American Confederate flag is shown here. This flag symbolises a political ideal of a utopia for which and under which those who believed in this fought. However, this political utopia that they dreamed of never existed in the realm of reality. It represents idealism rather than events or experience.

The same then is true of a symbol insofar as it is used to discuss God. This flag also conjures up quite a different image for African Americans, who might see it as a symbol of racism, slavery or oppression. Indeed, it 'participated' in these ideas insofar as it was used by those who perpetuated these ideas and actions. Therefore, we can see from this example that a symbol can mean many different things.

Tillich's use of symbol is cognitive – it is fair and reasonable to enquire as to whether a statement made can be said to be true or false. **J H Randall** (1909–1980) argues that symbols are not representative. Symbols, he argues, are not representative of a wider belief system. A symbol is a person who is interpreting the symbol. For Randall, religion has a specific and unique function in collective human psychology and culture. It communicates in a particular and special way. It can explain his philosophy of music; music moves emotions of humans in a particular way. It can express or communicate.



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Regarding symbols, in his book *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion* (1958)

*They make us receptive to qualities of the world encountered and they open our eyes to
which that world, in cooperation with the spirit of man, can clothe itself. They
religious dimension of our world better, the 'order of splendour' and of man's experience
us how to find the Divine; they show us visions of God.*

For Randall, the God that is debated here is not an entity outside the mind of the individual. It has invaluable cultural purposes. However, as for the truth of God, he attributes it to the
experience of the individual – in the way in which music functions to move and inspire. This
obviously refute this as their experience and beliefs would contradict the idea that God is an
entity outside them. It is not rather an imagined ideal within their own consciousness.



INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



⁵ *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion*, J H Randall, (1958)

Quick Quiz

1. What is an analogy?

.....

2. What is a symbol?

.....

3. Define via positiva.

.....

4. Define via negativa.

.....

5. What is equivocal language?

.....

6. What did Aquinas mean by attribution?

.....

.....

7. Give an example of a religious symbol.

.....

8. What does Tillich mean by a symbol does?

.....

.....

9. Give an example of this.

.....

.....

10. How does John Hick challenge this view?

.....

.....

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



4.2 Verification and Falsification Debates

Within discussions of philosophy of religion, the provable truth of the existence of God, and resulting religious views, has been at the centre of large amounts of debate. The seeking of verification of beliefs and the attempt to disprove the reliability of religious statements have been two major themes which have defined the discipline of philosophy of religion. It debates whether or not some form of truth or knowledge could be argued to exist, and whether or not it can be achieved.

Verification

Logical positivism is a school of thought that became hugely popular among Western philosophers in the early twentieth century, and was supported by the Vienna Circle from 1924 to 1936. It was a collection of philosophers of varying disciplines from natural and social sciences to mathematics, who met throughout this period of time to discuss and debate a variety of subjects ranging from the nature of the world to methods of knowledge. They published a variety of documents including their own journals. The group was named the Vienna Circle due to their meeting within the University of Vienna, and they met within the context of the sociopolitical changes happening near Austria in the early twentieth century, the rise of Nazism in Germany escalating into the Second World War. The group ended with the murder of their chair Moritz Schlick by one of his students, following a graduation ceremony.

They subscribed to the principles of logical positivism.

This is a method of philosophically ascertaining what knowledge can be said to be objectively true based on whether or not it is empirical. This is also known as **a posteriori** rather than **a priori**. It is a method of thought that posits that you can only verify the truth of a statement if it can be empirically known – that is, if it is tangible, if it can be verified by sensory knowledge. This is known as the **verification principle** – that in order to be cognitively meaningful, a statement must be able to be proved by some form of procedure or test. The Vienna Circle, who subscribed to this view, questioned the place and role of the philosopher in society, and used this to determine whether or not they can be said to be true, and what can be said to be meaningful or meaningless.

The logical positivists believed that a statement is only meaningful if it can be verified by empirical evidence. An example of a statement that is not verifiable is 'The object of the triangle is anything'.

The logical positivists were looking at what counts as meaningful language, and decided whether a proposition was cognitively meaningful – whether it could be evaluated. There are two ways this could be done: either by the proposition being analytic – known a priori – or being synthetic and being verifiable by experience. For the most part, what people are really interested in are synthetic statements for the purposes of generating new knowledge.

Hugely influenced by the Vienna Circle, English philosopher and writer **A J Ayer (1910–1989)** published the influential *Language, Truth and Logic* in 1936. He posited that various disciplines within philosophy (including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and philosophy of religion) are meaningless because they are not verifiable.

In order to communicate this idea, he used different terms referring to different kinds of statements: **analytic**, **synthetic** and **contingent** statements. These were used to the right.

Analytic
These statements are true under all circumstances.
Synthetic
These statements are true or false depending on the facts of the world.
Contingent
These statements are true or false depending on the circumstances.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



He also posited two different forms of verification – **strong** verification and **weak** verification.

Strong and weak verifications were described by Ayer as follows:

A proposition is said to be verifiable, in the strong sense of the term if, and only if, it can be established in experience. But it is verifiable, in the weak sense, if it is possible for it to be established in experience.

However, there is a slight issue with this principle of strong verification as posited. Verification of a statement is impossible if it is based on the experience as proof, but the experience of human beings is flawed. Our senses are flawed – impaired vision which could lead to our experiences being mistaken. For example, you could easily be misled. Experience cannot always be relied upon because of the flawed nature of empirical evidence. Experience cannot always be relied upon to be conclusive proof.

The issue with strong verification is not so much that experience is unreliable, but cognitively meaningful statements that aren't simply verified through experience. Statements such as 'The Battle of Hastings took place in 1066' or theories such as 'gravity exists' are not verified through experience. As such, the main issue with strong verification is that it exempts too many statements from being meaningful, whereas weak verification corrects this, as, in theory, one could experience historical events or theories as having meaning through observable evidence.

Therefore, if we run with this logic, every statement that we make is meaningless. Statements which we consider within our society to be an accepted reality, would be challenged and effectively rendered meaningless. We cannot trust our senses to reliably tell us things about the world; to gravity; therefore, it cannot be proved, and so the statement that gravity exists is meaningless. This causes somewhat of a problem; it works logically, but on a practical level it is problematic. Ayer states in his previously cited work that with the exception of tautologies, 'it is not possible to make a significant statement of fact at all'.⁷

However, weak verification is slightly easier to work with. The criterion, as aforementioned, is that a statement being probably rather than provable. The example Ayer uses to illustrate weak verification regards the existence of mountains on the hidden side of the Moon. Before the Apollo work (1934-1969) we did not have the knowledge we now have about the Moon. Before this it is reasonable to posit that there are mountains on the side of the Moon that we cannot see. Through verification this statement has meaning even if it had been proved to be untrue. When the Apollo 11 produced photographs of the other side of the Moon in 1969, it showed it to be true. Therefore, there are mountains on the other side of the Moon.

How then do these principles interact with religious beliefs and philosophy of religion? Ayer's position on religion and philosophy of religion is somewhat damning, as he argues that statements such as 'There exists a transcendent God' has no literal significance.

'There exists a transcendent God' has no literal significance.

He argues that statements such as the example stated are meaningless by the standards of weak verification and strong verification. However, it is important to stress that Ayer's assertions regarding the meaningless nature of assertions about God's existence does not only apply to positive statements – it extends to atheism also. Stating that God does not exist is as meaningless to Ayer as stating that he does. Ayer views any discussion surrounding philosophy of religion and the existence of God as being meaningless and, therefore, a waste of time.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



⁶ Ayer, A J, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 1936

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

The implications of this claim are big – it would imply that all religious belief and the existence of God, is meaningless. It would posit that the discussion regarding the discursive process of philosophy of religion – is inherently meaningless, with little statements in such a way and wish to speak only in ‘meaningful’ ways, it is not just abandoned, but religious disbelief too – and all forms of discussion regarding religion

Criticisms of Logical Positivism

As ever, strong viewpoints posited within discussions of philosophy of religion are not new. Ayer is no exception; especially when coming up with a viewpoint that would render the entire project essentially meaningless and void.

- The main issue with the verification principle is that it **cannot be meaningful**. By both standards of verification set forward by Ayer, the principle itself fails the test. It is not empirically able to be proved as we cannot sense the principle. It is not self-defining insofar as it does not prove itself; it is not a tautology, it is itself meaningless and, by the standard of Ayer, not worth considering.
- The issue is taken with the foundationalism-based stance of logical positivism. Statements do not need to be proved because they are self-evidential (an example is ‘cogito’ – I think, therefore I am). Those who stand for logical positivism argue that all statements are self-evidential; however, it is not necessarily. How can we conclusively say that the statement is true?
- The argument rests on the strong association with science and facts. It compounds the garnering of truth. Examples of this would include truth derived from other sources such as art or music. There can be deeper meaning and deeper truth found within the arts than in science. It is the reason why these mediums are universal and are found across all cultures. It is important to emphasise that this does not mean that there is no truth in science, as one might argue. The point is that things can be meaningful and true or false (e.g. non-cognitive) and that certain claims about art are truth-evaluable.
- **Brummer** argues that it is wrong to view religious sentences in the same way as scientific sentences. He argues that if one takes the example of poetry – poetry produces a kind of analysis that is not scientific. If it would not make sense to scientifically analyse a sentence, then it does not make sense to say that just because it cannot be scientifically measured it does not exist. One can experience this to be true. In much the same way, it does not hold to view religious sentences as scientific sentences.
- **Emmet** is another thinker who takes issue with logical positivism. She argues that religious sentences fail to understand the nature of metaphysical thinking. Natural theology, in her view, is more analogous rather than scientific. Faith and religious sentences for Emmet are expressions rather than explanations.
- **Richard Swinburne** refutes logical positivism on the grounds that there are statements that have meaning which would be rendered meaningless under the criteria of logical positivism. He wouldn’t make sense to call them meaningless. The example he uses to express this is: *Some of the toys that to all appearances stay in the toy cupboard while any time you open the cupboard doors come out of their boxes and dance in the middle of the night without disturbing you, then go back to the cupboard, leaving no trace of their activity*⁹
- Further argument is found in the understanding of the significance of sentences. If a sentence would understand to be meaningless, then it is not a sentence.
- For example, if I were to instruct you to ‘open the window’, and as response you opened the window, then meaning has been communicated there. However, by the definition of logical positivism, nothing meaningful has been said. Instead of the phrase ‘open the window’, I could have said ‘Curdsvald blewination proccal taperipplinuts’, you could have no idea what I meant, and it would have no sense to the listener and, therefore, there is not a response that is reasonable. Under logical positivism, however, both of these phrases have the same perceived meaning. Communication and measured response seem to pose an issue with logical positivism.

DISCUSSION

If the principle of verification is meaningless then what is the point of philosophy of religion?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



⁹ Swinburne, R, *The Coherence of Theism*, 2016

- Some propositions can only be verified by experience – for example, eschatological ideas can be proved to be correct following death, such as the existence of a God. Eschatological verification is specifically a response to the weak verification principle. It would be allowed under the weak verification principle to verify the existence of God in the afterlife. It would be allowed under the strong verification principle.
- There is also an issue with sentences which are unintuitively not allowed by the verification principle, statements about things which are unobservable. For example, statements about the afterlife; however, they explain much about our world. These issues were raised by positivists but did consistently prove difficult to navigate for them.



ACTIVITY

In a spider diagram, write the below statement in the middle. Evaluate the statement using logical positivism and the verification principle.

Then, label your evaluation with arguments which might challenge the statement.

'God is Love.'

Falsification

Anthony Flew (1923–2010) is a philosopher who is among those who have taken a strong stance against religious belief. He was a rational disbeliever. He challenged theists, those who profess belief in God, with statements they made.

He borrows a parable first used by British philosopher John Wisdom – it posits that the real challenges to their stated belief in God. The parable in question is (paraphrased)

Two explorers come upon a beautiful garden, and in it. The garden is full of flowers and also contains many weeds. The 'Faithful' explorer, looking at the garden, posits that it must be tended by a skilled gardener. The 'Sceptic' explorer disagrees as there are probably no gardeners. The 'Faithful' explorer stays in the garden and keep watch, looking for the Gardener. The 'Sceptic' explorer leaves and they find no evidence of the Gardener. As time passes and the weather changes, the Gardener, the Believer begins to create more and more outlandish justifications as to why they have not seen him.¹⁰

Using this analogy, Flew intends to equate the believing explorer with theists, the disbeliever, and to equate belief in the Gardener to belief in the existence of God.

He equates the increasingly outlandish ideas of the believing explorer as being akin to the existence of God, who, he argues, ignore the 'weeds' in the form of the issues that challenge belief. He argues in this way that those who believe in God lack the empirical evidence to prove his existence, yet, despite this, continually insist in his existence. Through his invocation of this parable, Flew offers the following challenge to those who continually believe in God like the Believer explorer.

What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the existence of God?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



¹⁰ Flew, Anthony, *Theology and Falsification*, 1950

¹¹ Ibid.

By posing it in this way, Flew wishes to challenge theists to come to one of two conclusions:

1. admit that there is evidence that exists that points towards the disproving of their beliefs
2. admit that there is no evidence that exists that could alter their state of belief

In the case of the first conclusion, Flew views religion to be rendered meaningless but retains its emotional and significant meaning to the believer, but it is false in the eyes of the philosopher.

In the case of the second conclusion, Flew views religion as being unable to be proved, and thus his view that it is completely meaningless.

Based on this, Flew puts forward the idea of the falsification proposition. We can test falsifiable statements to see whether or not they are falsified. The example that Flew puts forward is the phrase 'all cats have four legs'. If all cats have four legs, then it would logically follow that there are no cats which exist with three legs. Therefore, should we one day encounter a three-legged cat, this assertion would be proved false and we would know that the statement was false. Flew accuses theists of wilfully ignoring encounters with evidence which might contradict their beliefs regarding God in the same way as one might ignore the three-legged cat.

Note: It is impossible for someone who does believe in God to be non-sane blicks – one can distinguish between the two.

Flew acknowledges that it can be difficult for people to let go of long-held beliefs and that some beliefs might be irrefutable. However, the problem he finds is that despite constant evidence which might contradict their held beliefs, these people refuse to acknowledge this. He writes:

Someone may dissipate his assertion completely without noticing that he has done so, or he may be killed by inches, the death by a thousand qualifications.

Therefore, he lays the challenge – should those who believe in God accept the falsification test? He asks them to be able to show how God would not exist. It is indeed a challenge that appears to be impossible on first look, as his answering philosophers have argued.

R M Hare, particularly, while acknowledging the strength of Flew's argument, poses his own analogy. His analogy functions as below.

There is a madman who is completely convinced that all dons are out to kill him. He asks his friends to tell him that this is not the case and provide evidence to show this. However, he remains convinced that they are all out to kill him.

When put to Flew's falsification test, since no evidence supports the madman's theory, his theory is rendered meaningless. However, Hare argues that the madman may have plenty of evidence to support his theory. Dons wish to kill him. However, it might not be the kind of evidence which the friends can provide. For Hare, the evidence might be the same provided information, but the world view of the madman is different. If it is taken and this will be a hindrance in the testing method. The perceived good intentions of the friends symbolise well-meaning intent, but to the madman it may be interpreted as a conspiracy to murder. Both are valid. These biases, or world views, are termed 'blik's.

Blik's, he argues, are unfalsifiable. They are part and parcel of our everyday experience and the way in which we navigate the world. However, it is possible, in the view of Hare, to draw a distinction between those which can be said to be true and those which cannot. Most would argue that when we are faced with a blik, we should not argue that what is forward by Hare, the blik held by the madman, is false.

Clearly then, this idea of blik's impact the discussion of religious ideas and religious statements by considering blik's rather than what Flew terms them (assertions)?

Basil Mitchell responded to the works of both Flew and Hare. He disagreed with both Flew and Hare. He disagreed with Flew that religious blik's and assertions are absolutely falsifiable. He also disagreed with Hare that the opposite is possible, i.e. to assert that God exists is to deny the possibility that

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



He posits instead three different ways in which religious language can be understood:

- 1: **Provisional hypothesis** → this is a scientific idea which can be disproved, and can be given to prove it wrong. Flew argues that religious statements can fall into this description, and Mitchell believes that such statements or beliefs are not acceptable.
- 2: **Vacuous formulae** → with 'vacuous' meaning empty, this term refers to beliefs that are based on experience but also have no large impact on the life of the individual. This is not acceptable into this description, and Mitchell believes that such statements or beliefs are not acceptable.
- 3: **Significant articles of faith** → these are religious beliefs that are strongly held, have a large impact on the life of the individual, and to which an individual is hugely committed. Beliefs which are not acceptable fit into this category.

Mitchell also argues that religious people need to be wary about the beliefs they hold, and to those beliefs in order to ensure that they do not become vacuous formulae. He argued that religion is susceptible to falsification – which is why, in his view, religion is not acceptable. He argued that faith means that one holds a significant belief in spite of competing evidence, so long as the belief does not become provisional or vacuous.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Quick Quiz

1. What is logical positivism?

.....

2. What are analytic statements?

.....

3. Define strong verification.

.....

4. Define weak verification.

.....

5. What is Ayer's position on religion?

.....

6. In what way does logical positivism contradict itself?

.....

7. Who posited the idea of falsification?

.....

8. In which parable did he put this idea forward?

.....

9. What conclusions did he believe challenged theists?

.....

.....

10. How does Hare challenge these ideas?

.....

.....

.....

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



4.3 Language Games

Ludwig Wittgenstein and Language Games

As if analogy did not complicate discussion regarding religious belief enough, one also look at the meaning put into a word by the person who is using it. Within discussion, depending on the viewpoints of the people involved, two people could completely different meanings while using the same word. Therefore, it is key to attempt to understand what these different meanings are and how this might affect debates. This is a concept which is known as language games.

It was famously formulated by Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein was an Austrian philosopher who lived in Cambridge. He is famous for his work including one published book: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. He is now respected as a great thinker. He was Jewish by descent.

The *Tractatus* heavily influenced logical positivism, as it put forward the picture theory of propositions (this will be discussed later in this section).

The picture theory claims that propositions put forward a representation of states of affairs. A proposition is true or false depends on whether this representation is accurate or not. Propositions which do not present a representation of the world, such as God or metaphysics, are considered meaningless.

It is in later works that Wittgenstein changes his views (see posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*). He renounces picture theory, and instead looks at how language is used in life, rather than its logical form, to represent things.

In this way Wittgenstein is dealing with the capacities of language in both works, but approaching it differently and drawing different conclusions.

Wittgenstein's concept of language games is rooted in the context of 'Lebensformen' which means 'forms of life'. It is from the basis of these forms of life that Wittgenstein developed his concept of language games.

Regarding the picture theory of language games, it seemed to him that the way in which people use words was not destructive because they intended different things by the same words but rather the interpretation of these words.

For example, should an alien without any concept of British idioms overhear the phrase 'it is raining cats and dogs', they would vastly misunderstand the statement. Without the context of cats and dogs they would interpret it to literally mean that there were domesticated animals falling from the sky. However, that this phrase is just an idiom which means that it is raining heavily. Therefore, if their context has not changed, but the interpretation has completely altered the meaning of the words, the alien does not have the key to understanding the meaning of the idioms. Therefore, within the thought system of Wittgenstein, the British person and the alien have different 'languages'.

Within every part of our lives there are particularities regarding language that make up our lives. Regional slang, dialects and personal beliefs all influence the words we use. For example, the way in which someone might talk to their significant other will be different to the way in which they speak to their boss (you would not say 'boss' to your significant other).

In order to understand the communication that is taking place, the outsider listening must understand the context and the resultant meaning of the words in order to understand the communication.

Wittgenstein makes this the crux of his language games. He compares it to playing a game. For example, if someone tries to play football by the rules of netball there will result in confusion. A tennis ball and a basketball are hugely different structures and used in different sports despite both being a type of ball. If you try to treat them the same way, there will be inefficiency in playing either game correctly.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



It is not the ball, but the context which is important. In the same way, it is not the word which indicates the meaning. Therefore, what one person might mean when discussing religion is completely different from others. What Richard Dawkins means when he uses the word 'God' is different from what a modern-day Christian, Jew or Muslim will mean when they use the word. For people discussing such things it is important that each understands what the other means. It is incredibly difficult for them to discuss it even with the understanding of the other person's rules. It is like different rules in different games; they are meaning different things using different words.

Furthermore, there are also relationships between words creating families of words. Wittgenstein's thought as being related to the idea of 'family resemblance' is that words have different functions. Therefore, some words might function in a similar fashion to an extent, but they have different functions in their own right. It is like different tools; they have different functions in their own right.

Wittgenstein's language games emphatically do not function in such a way as they do in science. In science, words function to create reality. Your words, and what you mean by them, determine what you wish to express.

Furthermore, those who know the rules of language games in terms of religion, i.e. they employ what is known as **fideism**. This is the sourcing of knowledge from faith and not from empiricism. Those who are playing different language games – the religious and the scientific – have different sources of knowledge and different benchmarks for what constitutes a reasonable claim.

No wonder they can never agree!

Strengths of language games theory

- It shows that religious language is non-cognitive.
- It shows how and why religious language is different from other types of language and should be treated differently.
- It provides boundaries for the correct use of language. Instead of an 'anything goes' approach, there are rules about how language is to be used within each 'game'.
- Believers can be taught the meaning and rules behind language used in the religious 'game'.
- Religious language can be defended against criticisms from other games, as it is context-specific.
- Wittgenstein was talking about the capacities of language – it may be that religious and scientific language are common ground from which to criticise each other.
- Importantly, what it does do, though, is show that tests of meaning in a scientific context are different from those in a religious 'game', and this might be vital for defending religious claims.

Weaknesses of language games theory

- It does not allow for believers' claims to be empirically tested or proved true or false. It simply considers them important and possible.
- Religious language alienates those outside the game, as the language used is not easily adapted to allow them in. Therefore, others might not understand, for example, to say 'God is Love'.
- Believers' claims can be empirically tested, if that forms part of their game. Some scientists, like John Mitchell, believe there is evidence for religious claims. Language game theory suggests that religious claims are not about the world or from reality, but are simply part of a game.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Picture Theory

- Also in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein posits what is known as his picture theory. This is his idea that in order for a statement to have some kind of meaning it should picture something which is a fact. For example, if someone states that there is a tree outside, and then there actually is a tree outside the window upon investigation, then there is truth to the claim.
- Wittgenstein himself cast criticism on his theory in a way of revision. He later revised his thoughts on the matter, replacing his picture theory with what is known as a use theory of meaning in latter works; a phrase with meaning is useful only because it conveys meaning and is understood to do so.
- In *Pulling Up The Ladder*, Richard Brockhaus critiques picture theory as he argues that it does not go far enough to explain all phrases which we understand to have meaning, stating that, '*we must still explain how human beings recognize the senses of unanalyzed ordinary propositions, which are not obviously pictures at all*'.¹²

Religious Significance of Language Games

While Wittgenstein wrote little on religion itself, he did lecture on it. A large amount was garnered from notes made by those present during a series of three lectures on religion.

He views religion as being a disposition rather than a faith.

A large number of religious people have argued that the concept of language games leads towards an understanding of religious faith and speaking about religious faith in a way that those who do not believe can understand.

Should Wittgenstein be considered to be correct in his ideas regarding language games? If people are playing different language games, then their methods of discussing religion are completely different and their words contain different meanings. To a believer, a theist, 'God' is a word that describes beliefs, and is full of meaning. However to an atheist it is effectively an empty term.

This creates what of a paradox—God is a reality for theists and a non-reality for atheists. This is an issue in the discussion between the two groups – there is a disjunction between the two sides of the discussion. They are playing by different rules. This is known as 'conceptual confusion'. If you have of the same word will mean that the discussion will not necessarily be coherent. For an atheist, God as a hypothesis; for a theist, God might be a personal, emotional reality.

They are taking different languages. It is vital to understand this within the thought of Wittgenstein. When analysing how terms are used by the speaker we cannot analyse what they are trying to say. What might reject as God is different from the one which a believer might believe in.

Furthermore, language games can be divided into two camps: cognitive and non-cognitive.

Cognitive involves the mental action of interpretation.

Non-cognitive is not related to the act of knowing or mental interpretation. This is a statement which is deemed neither accurate nor inaccurate.

As an example of a scholar who took a non-cognitive view of this, **Don Cupitt's** very famous book *The Sea of Faith* and a popular TV show of the same name. This was a television show for those who adhered to a particular brand of thought, and was how they referred to the idea that the concept of God represents and expresses more here than simply the

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



¹² Brockhaus, Richard, *Pulling Up The Ladder: The Metaphysical Roots of Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

The Christian God is coded spirituality, argues Don Cupitt. This is also known as the 'God of the gaps' – Cupitt argues that it matters far less whether or not there is a God – that it matters more that the love of God is shared and manifests within the community of believers.

He argues that there is no God – rather different ideas of God are not rooted in the existence of God but rather of the experiences which led to the interpretation of the idea of God.

D Z Phillips disagrees with him, however, stipulating that Cupitt doesn't understand that language was a Welsh philosopher who was focused on the use of language. He argues that religious language defines the rules of a particular language game. The context for Phillips is Wittgenstein's key. Religious language, in his view, does not require justification to non-believers because they are outside the context of the game. It has meaning only to who use it in the context of their belief. Religious language only has meaning within the religious community. The example he uses is the phrase 'God is Love' – it is not, in the context of a **benevolent** God, but rather a demonstration from the religious community of how love is to be used within that context.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Quick Quiz

1. Who posited the theory of language games?
.....
2. What is meant by the term 'language games'?
.....
3. How are religious rituals compared to sports in this theory?
.....



4. What is meant by Wittgenstein's ideas of families of words?
.....
.....

5. Define fideism.
.....
.....

6. Define empiricism.
.....
.....

7. What is picture theory in Wittgenstein's thought?
.....



8. How is this critiqued?
.....
.....

9. Into what two categories can language games be divided?
.....

10. What paradox does the theory of language games create?
.....
.....



INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**





5 WORKS OF SCHOLARSHIP

Religious belief, religion, religious languages and associated issues are at the centre of the discussion. There are a large number of scholars of theistic, atheistic and agnostic views who put their voices to the ongoing debate and discussion surrounding this multifaceted topic.

Those who are of an agnostic or atheistic viewpoint tend to put forward theories about the development of religion and critique the way in which it is used, such as Durkheim's sociological explanations. These are explanations for the widespread phenomenon of religious belief without necessarily positing that the religion is centred on something actually real, as consistent with the beliefs of scholars who posit these views.

Various theistic scholars have replied to such ideas in their own words, attempting to defend their academic theories or their peers' ideas regarding religious belief. An example of such a direct debate on religious ideas such as contingency and religious experience began with the 1948 BBC radio debate between Frederick Copleston and Bertrand Russell, which is still available on YouTube.

5.1 Context to Critiques of Religion and Points of Discussion

Respective Strengths and Weaknesses of Religious Belief

In the philosophical study of religion, it is important to consider both the strengths and weaknesses of religious belief. Many theists, atheists and agnostic philosophers have over the years argued for the strengths and weaknesses of religious belief.

The strengths of religious belief could be considered to be the following:

- The presence of order within the world; it does seem difficult to process that the world (irreducible complexity) could have happened as a result of chaos.
- The beauty we can observe and the greatness of the world have no biological explanation; there is a purpose beyond biological chance. This could be design.
- Some prayers have been testified to by believers to have been answered.
- Many of the moral teachings within Scripture appeal to our innate sense of morality; for example, that killing other human beings is wrong.
- It provides comfort for those who need it and a hope for life after death, when loved ones have died.
- Religious experiences have been frequently documented – such a wealth of testimony that all of these cannot be untruths. This probably would indicate that it is likely that there is something there.
- There are many moral ideas and teachings which are held commonly within the world.
- Religious beliefs have led people to do incredible things in the name of God, such as caring for the poor or sick.
- Religious beliefs have also influenced people to address injustices in society; for example, the case of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Religious teachings encourage goodness in people, ideally leading to a harmonious world.

Weaknesses of religion could be considered to be the following:

- Religious experiences can be explained in other ways, e.g. as hallucinations.
- The **existence of evil and suffering** in the world is incompatible with belief in a God who wants humans to suffer, and in an omnipotent God who is powerful enough to create a world without it.
- The world can be explained through science.
- There is **insufficient evidence** God does exist – he does not seem to want to reveal himself to people. Therefore, it could be argued to be more **probable** that he doesn't exist.
- Religious arguments include numerous theological inconsistencies and illogicalities; for example, an omnipotent but created a world in which there is suffering.
- God is invented by people who are emotionally, intellectually or psychologically troubled and need God to help with these problems.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



- Prayers are not answered.
- Scripture contains lack of coherence.
- Moral teachings are outdated and have no relevance today.
- Religious beliefs have led people to do terrible things in the name of God.
- Religious beliefs encourage followers to be good because it is what God wants, which would be more moral.

These reasons are cited by many who chose atheism as their belief system (explaining being reasons why religion might be considered to be a **less probable** explanation of experience within the world, and indeed of the world itself).

Such people might prefer alternative explanations for religious belief. These are

Alternative Explanations

This topic discusses some of the critiques of religion from outside the field of theology, primarily sociology and psychology. So far, you have been critiquing religion from within, discussing whether certain religious arguments are philosophically sound. Sociology is a different kind of critique. Sociology sees religion as the product of society and as a social construct. Psychology sees religion as a product of the mind and acted out due to psychological factors. This section discusses alternative explanations as to why religious beliefs have developed.

Naturalism and Materialism

Another argument for the non-existence of God (and, therefore, against religious beliefs) is the argument of naturalism and materialism.

Naturalism is the belief that true knowledge can only be gained through examination of the natural world. It considers beliefs based on supernatural knowledge to be incorrect as they cannot be empirically verified.

It interprets religion as existing only in the natural world – rather than pointing to a higher or otherworldly realm – and is, therefore, a societal construct. It is likely to be concerned with how religion develops in different societies and what function or purpose it serves. This view is influential over sociological critiques of religion.

Explain
The critiques outlined above are successful in explaining the existence of religion. You need to find their arguments convincing.

Materialism is the belief that only physical matter exists. It interprets humans to be made up purely of material substances; for example, mental processes are the result of chemical changes in the brain. It denies the existence of non-material things such as God or supernatural activity. Therefore, religious beliefs are purely the result of neurological and psychological factors. This view is influential over psychological critiques of religion.

Sociological Critique of Religious Belief – Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)

A sociological critique of religious belief interprets religion to be a **sociological phenomenon**; as existing and performing certain functions in society. It recognises how religion affects and organises human behaviour within societies and gives meaning to human existence.

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist who critiqued religion in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. He gave a **functional explanation** for religion. This means that religion exists as a way to serve a particular function or practical purpose. The implication of this is that religion is not the product of divine truth or the need to worship God. It is given a purely secular purpose. Ultimately, God does not exist, but is the product of human society.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Different sociologists give slightly different functional explanations for Religion. Durkheim says the way to:

- hold and bind societies together
- preserve and enforce the social and moral order
- create general cohesiveness between individuals
- give meaning and purpose to life

This cohesiveness, unity and order is principally reinforced through society's performance of rituals, profane (ordinary) objects are imbued with sacred (divine) significance, such as the Eucharist. There is, however, no divine reality in such objects, only the meanings of society are projected onto them.



Religion as force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous.

Religions reflect the reality of the society: they express 'a system of notions by which individuals imagine the society to which they belong'. The society has shared rituals, values and identity which form part of this reality and have become the object of worship – what Durkheim called 'society divinized'. Therefore, religion is not the result of individuals alone, but the result of society acting together.

Analysis

- Religious believers do not hold that their worship is focused on the community or society. They distinguish between members of their religious community and belief in God. Equally, the meaning behind rituals and sacred objects is not interpreted by religious believers to be the ideals of society – it can sometimes even go against them.
- In multicultural societies, multiple religions can be practiced within one cohesive society.
- It is not consistent with the idea of religion that some religious believers who do not present themselves as such, actually act against it by encouraging reform and changes to society.
- Durkheim's theory is modelled on primitive aboriginal societies, e.g. primitive religion is different from modern religion today.
- Religion and society are not the same. Society's beliefs change, whereas religion is the same and resists the changing beliefs in society.
- Religions are not purely focused on their own society but are often concerned with encouraging universal adherence and moral codes.
- There are many reasons to suggest that God does exist (which you have studied). However, the fact that religion is a human construct may not be purely a societal phenomenon or human construct. The fact that religion is a human construct does not mean it is not true – it could perform both functions.



1. Religion is a social force that binds individuals together and creates a sense of community.
2. Durkheim's theory is modelled on primitive aboriginal societies, e.g. primitive religion is different from modern religion today.

EXAM PREP

For each critique you have studied, make a mind map of the key features and ideas.



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



¹³ Durkheim, E, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*

Sociological Critique of Religious Belief – Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Karl Marx was a German philosopher and political theorist, but was most famous as a communist revolutionary.

Marx interpreted religion as being utilised by the ruling classes to dominate and oppress the **masses**. While spiritualism as a whole can be viewed as important in Marxism, religion served this function because it made the masses believe they could find escape and freedom through the afterlife offered by religion. This stopped the masses rising up against the ruling classes to try to bring about greater equality and challenge the social order in this life.

Marx believed Christianity forced the view that what happened on Earth was part of God's plan, a providential plan. It was what God wanted. Therefore, to try to change the problems and oppression would be to challenge God.

When Marx was writing, workers did not have many rights and were often exploited by elites. If the workers had protested or gone on strike, this would have caused a lot of trouble for the ruling class.

Marx famously called religion the '**opium of the masses**'. This means religion is a drug that changes the outlook of believers and pacifies them.

Marx predicted that eventually workers would rise up and there would be a communist revolution. At this time, religion would wither away.

Overall, religion was an **illusion**. There was no God or higher reality. It was invented by the few within society to *achieve their own selfish purposes, and to ensure society remained unequal and unfair to the majority of people.*

Analysis

- Religion and the ruling classes or states are more separate today than Marx as society today are often completely unrelated to religion.
- Marx could be argued to have criticised Christianity because it has many teachings that encourage people to love their neighbours.
- Nowhere in Christian teaching or tradition does religion claim to try to pacify the masses. Marx would argue that the ruling classes would, of course, never admit to what they were doing.
- Liberation theology, a movement in South America, showed that Christianity could be used to challenge inequality and poverty. The central aim of liberation theology is to synthesise Marxism and Christianity.
- Marx argues Christianity and other religions are a contributing factor to why people are oppressed under capitalism. The issue is arguably not with the religion itself but with how it is manifested within a capitalist state. The ruling classes don't directly employ religion but as institutions become part of the ruling classes and the theology of Christianity is reversed – where the poor will become rich in the afterlife, making them think they are being rewarded.
- Marx tied religion as an illusion to happiness. Religion persists because it gives people a false sense of happiness in his view. Religion would, therefore, in this view, wither away under communism as people realise their happiness in an equal society. Every part of Marx's views has to be seen in the context of his structural ideas of capitalist and communist societies.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Psychological Critique of Religious Belief – Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)

Freud was an Austrian psychologist, and one of the most famous thinkers of the twentieth century.

Freud gave a **psychological** (rather than sociological) explanation of religion. It is a psychological account which put forwards the idea of religion as **projection**. Freud said religion was an ‘**illusion**’ and existed because believers have a psychological need

*to project their fears, anxieties and subconscious onto something greater than themselves as a way to relieve their anxiety. It is a way to cope with feelings of helplessness, inner impulses, and fear of death. Religion originates in the child's and young person's years and need for help. It cannot be otherwise.*¹⁴

Projection

The unconscious transfer of one's desires, emotions or needs onto something else.

It is a form of defence against unwanted feelings by denying their existence in oneself through attributing them to others.

Proponents of a projective explanation argue that religion restricts individuals from realising their full potential. It is a false belief that God exists and other damaging beliefs about divine truths which are superior to beliefs from science.

*When a man is freed of religion, he has a better and more wholesome life.*¹⁵

Freud famously called religion a **neurosis**; it is a form of mental illness, a figment of the subconscious, rather than a part of reality.

*Religion is a system of wishful illusions together with a disavowal of reality, such as the state of blissful hallucinatory confusion.*¹⁶

Freud explained the psychological need for religion through his famous idea of the **Oedipus complex**, argued in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). It is a part of normal human development involving involvement with one's mother and rivalry with or a wish to kill one's father. The resolution of one's father, as described in the Oedipus complex, leads the son to have unresolved feelings are resolved by elevating the memory of his father to a position of worship. Religious rituals also help individuals resolve these feelings. In Freud's view, religion is a human being's anxiety about chaos in the natural world. A god is invoked as a way to be appeased by human actions. This god then often takes human characteristics for comfort, e.g. father. As such, religion is built upon neurosis, and accommodates the Oedipus complex; this is the way Freud believed it should be understood. Freud argues that as the natural world grows, there is less need for religion as a response to anxiety.

God is, therefore, a father substitute and a projection of the **super ego** (internalised by societal influences).

Analysis

- Nelson and Jones (1957) said that the concept of God correlated more closely with their mother than with their father, as Freud suggested.
- Kate Lowenthal argued that not all religion is neurotic and immature. Some is serious and reflective.
- Arthur Guirdham argued that a religious stance could be just as neurotic as a non-religious one.
- Freud's theory is not as simple as he claimed and could be considered Freud's contribution to psychology in influence in psychology.
- Pete Marlowe suggests that Freud's need to explain everything according to sex was a projection of himself onto religion.

¹⁴ Freud, S, *The Future of an Illusion*

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



- It should be stressed that Freud's scientific reliability is widely viewed as being questionable as his theories were drawn from data which was limited in many ways and is, therefore, considered unscientific.

If God did exist, it wouldn't be out of the realms of possibility that human beings could be inspired by him or feel drawn to him. Therefore, Freud's argument boils down to: 'if God does not exist, then the psychological elements of religion'. This is linked to Freud's views about the unconscious mind. The scope of this spec, but might be useful if you wish to explore and challenge your knowledge.

Postmodern Interpretation of Religion

Postmodernism is a movement which developed in the middle to late twentieth century, particularly in the 1960s to 1980s. It has influenced philosophy, culture, architecture and art. Postmodernism is linked to ideas of scepticism and academic critique.

Modernist thought places a high emphasis on reason, resulting in quite literal interpretations of meaning, i.e. logical positivism can be seen as the end result. On the other hand, postmodernism itself is not a universal, unchanging force – interpretation can never escape the influence of social conditions. This means a text such as the Bible can never be exhausted of meaning as our understanding as times change. Therefore, conservative Christians, for example, are criticised for letting on in imposing one view on the Bible, while more liberal critics falsely think postmodernism is when faith behind the objects in the Bible rejects this. So this accords more with the idea of religious language, etc. It is also important to note before further discussion of this, as Westphal, that a lack of absoluteness or reasonableness does not affect validity.

Ideas surrounding religion have been influenced; however, this influence is not just a result of postmodernism. The Enlightenment period is known for having been one of the most important in history regarding the development of thought. It was immediately before the writing of the text referenced by Westphal. It was a time in which academic and politics experienced a break from religion. It saw huge shifts in the way in which science and philosophy were viewed. There were many conflicts as a result of new thoughts surrounding religion.

At this time there was also a period of many violent conflicts at the height of the Reformation. Thinkers at this time sought to find some kind of unity within faith in order to bring about a sense of seeking of a new kind of moral unity. From this background we can see the context in which the ideas which Westphal discusses make sense.

In his famous essay on postmodern discussions of religion, Merold Westphal (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame) does not offer his own opinion but rather writes an account of different views on religion. He focuses on the ideas of scholars and philosophers on this issue of religion, and the new emerging ways of thought that emerged during the Enlightenment.

He believes that deism found its roots in the Enlightenment. The reasons for this were based in historical power structures and events – the Church had traditionally been given the special revelation from God and, therefore, the receiver of truth. The Enlightenment started a discussion with a view to changing this. It also marks a shift in the way of thought surrounding religion and philosophy – the focus of the discussion went from being about the truth to being about the power of the Church.

Immanuel Kant is one of the philosophers whose work Westphal focuses with. His work turns on both scholasticism and deism.

Scholasticism was a movement which saw faith and reason to be combined, whereas deism separates the two. It is the belief that there is a first cause which created the world (such as the God of traditional religion). However, within deism this God does not interfere with the world – he has left the world to its own devices.

Westphal, like many others within the community of the Enlightenment thinkers, believed that the conflicts caused by religion could only be stopped when religion could be unified under what he called 'the rule of reason' – that being, that those who were of religious backgrounds agreed upon a set of common principles. Individualistic claims held by religions in this view had to be done away with; for example, the claim that God had revealed himself to a particular individual.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



claim that Christ is the only way, and Jews could not claim to be God's chosen people. The monopoly on truth. Individualist claims which do not unite religions had to be rejected.

Deism, in the view of Kant, had an emphasis on the inherently human facets of religion. It was about what one could or could not about God, and more about stopping the potentially harmful religious dogma. He argued that this movement is because of three main concerns he observed in society:

1. The importance (and authority) of the use of human reason
2. Tolerance of religion, among those who are religious and those who are not
3. **Anticlericalism**

Kant and Hume argue that the use in their writings and thoughts of a priori and a posteriori criticism of the traditional arguments for God (i.e. cosmological, teleological and ontological) succeeded. They felt that they had sufficiently made the case against these arguments. They did not believe that they had disproved God, but disproved the arguments being made for God. Interestingly, it should be noted here that Kant himself was in fact a devout Christian. They then turned their attention from discussions of God towards religion. It was argued that there had been sufficient discussion on the topic of these arguments and, therefore, the truth could only be established by discussion on the topic of religion and how religion impacts individuals and groups.

They argue for a universal religion of sorts. Kant considers that tradition and ritual are a form of fetish. The things over which people were warring – religious dogmas – are the consequence. He instead posits that the best way to be 'religious' is to love God and others, love of God is displayed, which does not happen through thought rituals.

For Kant, religion and morality are two separate things. Morality does not necessarily view duties as divine commands rather than moral acts out of genuine goodness. It is separate to religion, in the view of Kant. He believed that the Christianism of religion is best used as a moral exemplar.

Nietzsche is also discussed. He believed religion to be limiting humanity from fulfilling its full potential.

The ideas of rationalism also emerged here. God, it is argued, could be understood within theory through pure reason (a priori) rather than through experience (empiricism). This, it was then argued, tied religion not to one particular Church. This is the idea of anticlericalism rising once again.

Key Terms

The critiques studied here, by Marx, Freud and Durkheim, have been very influential in modern thought. They can be seen as contributing to the rise of **atheism** and agnosticism. These are beliefs regarding the unbelief (lack of belief) in God.

Types of atheism: there is great debate about what the definition of **atheism** is, as to whether it could be described as merely the absence of belief (**unbelief**) in God, or whether it is the firm belief that there is no God.

There are different types of **atheism**, generally speaking, such as **weak atheism** and **strong atheism**. A weak atheist is an individual who does not believe in God but does not necessarily emphatically state this belief or advocate against belief in God. They simply do not believe in God, and may not even acknowledge their unbelief.

This means
'no God'
held by

A view
where
does exist
or partic

A view
where
firm be

The be
wrong to
and those

A lack of

The be
know
Agnosticism
possibility
insuffi

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



A strong atheist is an individual who is explicit in their belief that there is no God, their belief that God does not exist and oppose the practice of religion.

There are more modern forms of atheism that have emerged within the last couple of decades as a reaction to world events such as the increase in religious-based violence in the form of terrorism.

An example of a famous atheist is Richard Dawkins.

Some have attributed the creation of neo-atheism to the event of the 9/11 attack as the perpetrators claimed the event occurred in the name of their religion, Islam. Some thinkers go further than simply believing that there is no God. They believe that religion in the public sphere and the fact that people continue to believe in religion should be corrected. Examples of thinkers who would be included within this group would be Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris.

Dawkins' view of religion is very clear – he thinks religion is unreasonable. To some, Sigmund Freud, who also viewed religion as being unreasonable, but these two men have different bases. Freud argued that religion was a result of primal anxieties and the super ego, while Dawkins argues from the basis of genetics. He argues that there is a primal need to understand the world, yet what is understood about the world through science is explained by religion to make it more understandable. Some thinkers view religion as unreasonable and view science as the main way to approach and understand the world. This is a fairly objective viewpoint which views the religious stance of people as unreasonable. This is something that does not marry well with the postmodernist view of the world.

Westphal's view would oppose this as, in his postmodernist form of thought, he believes that there is no single viewpoint of the world. To argue that science is the only way to understand the world is as invalid as arguing that religion is the only way to understand the world. In his view, all can be considered to be valid.

Agnosticism

Philosopher William L Rowe states, 'Agnosticism is the view that human reason is incapable of providing rational grounds to justify either the belief that God exists or the belief that God does not exist'.

The term itself was first popularised by Thomas Henry Huxley in 1869. Agnosticism is not the belief that there is no God, while atheists firmly believe that there is no God, agnosticism is the view that there is insufficient evidence for the belief or the unbelief in God. They do not believe in God, but they also do not believe that there is absolutely no God.

Mistakenly assumed to have had atheistic views, Charles Darwin actually identified himself as an agnostic. In letters to a friend, stating that, 'I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of God. I think that generally ... an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind'. When considered there to be evidence that there is no God, he himself actually refuted the idea that atheism and believing in God were mutually exclusive, stating that it would be 'absurd to doubt the existence of God and an evolutionist'.¹⁹

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



¹⁷ Rowe, William L (1998). 'Agnosticism'. In Edward Craig. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor & Francis.

¹⁸ 'Letter 12041 – Darwin, C R to Fordyce, John, 7 May 1879' via Darwin Correspondence Project.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Quick Quiz

1. Give a strength of religious belief.

.....

.....

2. Give a weakness of religious belief.

.....

.....

3. Define naturalism.

.....

4. Define materialism.

.....

5. What was the viewpoint of Durkheim regarding religion?

.....

.....

6. What was the viewpoint of Marx regarding religion?

.....

.....

7. What was the viewpoint of Freud regarding religion?

.....

.....

8. What are the three main concerns of deism, according to Kant?

.....

.....

9. Define anticlericalism.

.....

10. In addition to Kant, which other writer is discussed in depth in Westphal?

.....

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



5.2 Bertrand Russell vs Frederick Copleston

Debate among the religious and the non-religious is obviously a rich and varied one, and modern philosophy. These have developed in theological and philosophical discussion of discussion for a radio debate held between Frederick Copleston and Bertrand Russell.

Before we address the various arguments put forward within this debate, some must first understand the philosophers themselves in order to give an understanding as to their important thought and their life experience, and how this might have informed their viewpoints.

The Philosophers

Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) was a British philosopher, logician, mathematician, and highly respected public figure. He lived from 1872 to 1970. He is remembered for his large contribution to the development of logic within philosophical thought. During his lifetime, he was interested in social and political action, and is viewed to have been the founding father of analytic philosophy. His viewpoint was largely anti-war and anti-imperialism. He viewed religion to be akin to superstition. He self-identified as an agnostic, however, his arguments would indicate he was an agnostic with atheist leanings. In the text *Why I Am Not a Christian*, he described his religious beliefs as follows:

Therefore, in regard to the Olympic gods, speaking to a purely philosophical audience, I am Agnostic. But speaking popularly, I think that all of us would say in regard to the gods, In regard to the Christian God, I should, I think, take exactly the same attitude.

Here, Russell is arguing a form of verification because he is rejecting metaphysical claims as unnecessary because they are not identifiable through empirical study.

He left behind an extremely impressive repertoire of authored texts including approximately multiple thousands of articles published throughout his lifetime. He is remembered for his important impact within modern philosophy.

Frederick Copleston, S J (1907–1974) was a Jesuit priest and, therefore, a Christian theist and philosopher. He was raised in an Anglican home, but converted to Catholicism as a teenager.

He was the author of the influential philosophical text *The History of Philosophy*, a multivolume text which gives a large, overarching picture of the history of philosophy until his day. This text sets out an account of philosophy through the ages from before Socrates, and carries through an account of philosophical thought to the likes of his contemporaries such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell. It is of great length – indeed, it spans 11 whole volumes. The collection climaxes on the 11th volume, which deals with logical positivism and existentialism.

In addition to his debate with Bertrand Russell, Copleston also took part in a variety of other philosophical debates on topics such as religious language and logic. He was a lecturer at Balliol College in Oxford and is remembered for having taught at Heythrop College. His notable works include an attempt to revisit St Thomas Aquinas' five ways for the existence of God, and his concepts of in esse and in fieri causes to the arguments proposed by Aquinas. These debates are not his most important, but are useful to give context to the work of both Russell and Copleston.

The Debate

In 1948, these two philosophers took part in a debate with each other about their views on the existence of God, which was broadcast on the BBC Radio and was entitled 'A Debate on the Belief in God'. The debate carried on for two hours. Russell stated his stance as an agnostic. As he was a Jesuit priest, Copleston's stance was that of a theist.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



²⁰ Russell, Bertrand, *Why I Am Not A Christian* (1927)

The debate in full is recorded and edited in John Hick's work; however, partial recordings on websites such as YouTube which are very useful to listen to when studying the debate with the philosophers.

Before entering debate, they agree on the premise of mutual understanding regarding the existence of 'God'.

The two main parts of the debate which will be analysed are the argument from contingency and the argument from religious experience. The arguments made by both the creative sides are discussed.

Contingency

The argument from contingency is stated within the debate itself as being based on the premise that all beings are contingent. It is summarised by Copleston in three stages as follows:

First of all, I should say, we know that there are at least some beings in the world which contain in themselves the reason for their existence. For example, I depend on my parents, and so on.

Now, secondly, the world is simply the real or imagined totality or aggregate of individual objects which contain in themselves alone the reason for their existence. There isn't any world distinct from or outside the individual objects which form it, any more than the human race is something apart from the members. The totality of objects or events exist, and since no object of experience contains within itself reason of its own existence, the totality of objects, must have a reason external to itself. That reason must be an existent being, either itself the reason for its own existence, or it is not. If it is, well and good. If it is not, then we proceed farther. But if we proceed to infinity in that sense, then there's no explanation.

So, I should say, in order to explain existence, we must come to a being which contains in itself the reason for its own existence, that is, a necessary being, which cannot not exist.

Copleston's eloquence, while putting forward the argument in a logical way, perhaps makes it more convincing. This is a cosmological form of argument for the existence of God, which is used by many philosophers from Plato and Aristotle. It posits that all beings are contingent – that is, they were caused to exist by other beings. Humans are caused biologically by their parents reproducing, which in turn caused their grandparents reproducing, and they by their great grandparents reproducing. At human history, this chain continues and stretches all the way back into recorded time. Contingency posits that this cannot continue forever, which is referred to as infinite regress. Therefore, there must have been one being which is necessary, starting the chain of contingency. This is the argument from contingency to be God.

To simplify, the argument from contingency can be put as follows:

- 1) There are some beings in the world that do not contain in themselves the reason for their existence.
- 2) The world as we can conceive of it is the aggregate of all the individual objects which form it.
- 3) None of these individual objects contains in itself alone the reason for its existence.
- 4) There is no world distinct from or outside the individual objects which form it.
- 5) Just as individual objects do not contain in themselves the reason for their existence, the totality of objects does not contain the reason of its existence.
- 6) The world of objects, therefore, must have a reason for its existence external to itself.
- 7) This reason must be an existent being.
- 8) That being is either the reason for its own existence or not.
- 9) If it is not, then one has an infinite regress of causes and there is no explanation for existence.
- 10) Therefore, there must exist a being which contains within itself the reason for its own existence.
- 11) This being is God.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



²¹ BBC Radio debate, 1948

The idea is that a contingent being must be preceded by a necessary being, and therefore, in this way the argument for the existence of God is put forward by the and this is the form of contingency argument that is put forward within the debate. In the debate, we can see both strengths and weaknesses of the argument as put forward.

Within the debate, both the strengths and weaknesses of the argument are put forward by Copleston supporting the argument and Russell critiquing. These are presented as follows:

Strengths:

- Copleston indicates that he has used this form of the argument as he believes in God, stating, *'I have made use of this argument from contingent to necessary being, principle of sufficient reason, simply because it seems to me a brief and clear opinion on a fundamental metaphysical argument for God's existence'*.²²

Weaknesses:

- Russell stipulates that there is a clear issue of the assumption of implication because one thing has a cause, that does not necessarily mean that all things have a cause. *'there seems to me a certain unwarrantable extension here; a physicist looks at the world and does not necessarily imply that there are causes everywhere'*.
- Russell: *'The difficulty of this argument is that I don't admit the idea of a necessary being. There is no particular meaning in calling other beings "contingent." The significance except within a logic that I reject.'*
- Russell: *'I can illustrate what seems to me your fallacy. Every man who exists has a mother, but the human race must have a mother, but hasn't a mother -- that's a different logical sphere'*. This is known as the **fallacy of composition**.

The conclusion:

Quite politely, their debate ended when the two philosophers reached somewhat of an impasse; they did not reach a definitive conclusion regarding the validity of the argument. It would appear, agreeing to disagree.

Copleston: *'But your general question, Lord Russell, is that it's illegitimate even to ask the question of the world?'*

Russell: *'Yes, that is my position.'*

Copleston: *'If it's a question that for you has no meaning, it's of course very difficult to discuss.'*

Russell: *'Yes, it is very difficult. What do you say -- shall we pass on to some other question?'*

Copleston: *'Let's.'*

Overall, one important thing to note about the debate is that Copleston is willing to accept the criteria of truth and meaning, whereas Russell adopts a very empiricist stance.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



²² BBC Radio debate

Religious Experience

A religious experience is an experience, as defined earlier, of something which is believed to come from a source external to the body of the experiencer. Some theists argue that this is a basis for an argument for the existence of God. This makes sense within the context of those who have experienced these things – if you believe you have been affected by an external force, then it follows that such a force must exist. This phenomenon as a basis for belief in God is also debated within the discussion in 1948 between Copleston and Russell.

It should be noted from the outset that Copleston does state, *'I don't regard religious experience as evidence for the existence of God'*; however, he does posit that the cause of the religious experience is the 'existence of God'.

They discuss the limitations of the argument regarding its subjectivity – the truth of the experience, they conclude, is subjective. The emotional response might be real; however, having an emotional response to what they perceive to be real. There is no proof of anything existing to other people.

Russell makes the point that while religious experiences are the impact of an external force or emotional response, these same or similar provocations can be made through other means.

Copleston does point out that many religious experiences are followed by notable characteristics and behaviours of the experiencers. This is often viewed to be a good reason to be convinced by their experience, for example, that it leads them to live a better life, he argues that this change would exemplify the sanity of the person in question – she has had the experience and truly believe in it, in the mind of a sane person, this would result in a change of points towards some kind of truth in what she is saying about his experience. *'...it could actually be proved that the belief was actually responsible for a good effect in the life of the person, it is a presumption in favor of some truth, at any rate of the positive part of the belief.'*

While both underline the distinction within their debate between concepts of God, Copleston agrees with Russell's reply that, in fact, it is not uncommon for emotional changes to happen in reaction to experiences of great works of fiction. The emotional responses are not all of a sudden make the fictional world which has caused it be considered real. This is an issue with the argument from religious experience.

Strengths

- One strength of the argument as posited by Copleston and to an extent agreed by Russell is the 'consensus of mankind' – there has been a wealth of individuals who have claimed to have had a religious experience. It seems improbable that every single person who has claimed to have had a religious experience (many of which share commonalities) is making it up.
- The change and effect which can be observed within the individual who has had a religious experience is argued by Copleston to be a strength of the argument. He believes that the change in the life of the individual gives some credence and element of truth to the experience they experienced it.
- Logic dictates that if a religious experience is truly experienced, then it must be caused by something that has caused the experience (God).
- While conceding that a change does not evidence the existence of the truth of the experience, Copleston states that *'but if it could be proved that the belief was actually responsible for a good effect in the life of the person, it is a presumption in favour of some truth, at any rate of the positive part of the belief.'*

²³ BBC Radio debate, 1948

Weaknesses

- Both Copleston and Russell agree that the argument from religious experience is relatively weak.
- Both agree that the argument from religious experience fails as the phenomena can be explained by psychological factors such as hallucinations.
- While Copleston argues that evidence for the value of religious experience is to be observed in the experiencer, they both agree that the same change or strong responses in people to things which are objectively untrue (e.g. the strong reaction to culture in reaction to heroines in fiction).
- As Russell states, 'The fact that a belief has a good moral effect upon a man is in its favour of its truth.'
- An experience does not necessarily point to God – it could just as easily point to a devil.

Conclusion

They both agree that the argument from religious experience is relatively weak. Copleston still some truth to be found within the experiences, whereas Russell disagrees. The comparison of the fiction comparison with Copleston conceding that in the case of the comparison 'loving a Phantom'.



ACTIVITY

Meet up with a course mate and assign yourselves the character of either Russell or Copleston. Have your own debate using the arguments they put forward as a basis. See if you can win the debate. Record your discussion.

At the end of the debate, make a mind map of the points you made and keep it for your portfolio.



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Quick Quiz

1. What was the religious view of Bertrand Russell?

.....

.....

2. What was the religious view of Frederick Copleston?

.....

.....

3. What issues were debated?

.....

.....

4. Whose version of contingency was discussed?

.....

.....

5. What was Copleston's view of contingency?

.....

.....

6. How did Russell respond?

.....

.....

7. What was Copleston's view of religious experience?

.....

.....

8. How did Russell respond?

.....

.....

9. How does the idea of change within an individual impact this?

.....

.....

10. What do the Japanese have in the discussion?

.....

.....

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**





6 INFLUENCES OF DEVELOPMENT IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Religious belief has, without a doubt, developed and changed. With the development of science as well as advances in literacy and education, the ability of individuals to develop theories has expanded. Religions also vary widely in their interpretations and beliefs. For example, the ideas of life after death within Christianity are hugely different from those within Buddhism.

Therefore, these different ideas and theories need to be addressed in order to be understood beyond the religious context. These differences have influenced the way in which religious beliefs are perceived. For example, modern experiences and their associated beliefs have become a topic of religious debate and beliefs.

Furthermore, religious ideas have been at the centre of various (occasionally heated) debates. The reality (or non-reality) of miracles have taken a larger role in philosophical and religious discussions.

Generally found at the centre of the debate of religion with non-religious viewpoints is the question of the world – how this world that we live in and experience in all its glory (and gore) came to existence has been at the centre of the debate between those who believe in a creator (and indeed, those who believe but also accept more modern scientific theories). It has become, for many, a highly emotive one within the modern day as more scientific cosmological theories, such as evolution and the cosmological constant theory have emerged to challenge traditional religious narratives.

6.1 Life after Death

Death is the great mystery, the one thing that humans cannot experiment with. It is the ceasing of biological function of a living being resulting in the ending of life and function of that being. It is the great unifying factor of all life forms, complex or simple, great or small.

As the average person is unlikely to experience death and return to tell the tale to living mortals, the mystery of what (if anything) happens after the point of death has pervaded human thought, literature and discussion, and death (and what comes after) as a theme has pervaded cultural awareness from the work of Dante's *Inferno*, to the pervading theme of death in popular children's literature series *Harry Potter*.

All of the main world religions have beliefs regarding the afterlife and what it holds for the way in which believers will act and practise their faith. Teachings surrounding different religious traditions are rich, diverse and at times distinctly different; however, a common thread – there is reference to a life after the event of death of the human. Beliefs in a sense of life after death are key elements of philosophical thought.

Therefore, within philosophical thought, this issue has become somewhat of a hot topic. The reality for all beings – nothing and no one is immortal, and we all must succumb to the end of life at some point. A somewhat macabre theme, but it has been central to many philosophical debates and religious traditions for a long time.

Generally speaking, there are a few common and distinct themes regarding different beliefs surrounding death and the afterlife. Ideas of a life after death in either heaven or hell are common themes, as are ideas of bodily or spiritual resurrection which are found in the Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Ideas of reincarnation are also prevalent among some faiths, such as Hinduism. Understanding the different ways in which the theme of belief in life after death manifests across different religious traditions is extremely beneficial when undertaking a study of the philosophy of the issue – it gives a breadth of understanding of the rich diversity of the topic as well as underlining the different ways in which philosophers have challenged these beliefs.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The study of this topic within this module is split into five different subsections, namely:

- Immortality of the Soul
- Rebirth
- Reincarnation
- Replica Theory
- Resurrection

These themes are present in religious and cross-religious tradition. It is important individually as, while they may interconnect and overlap often, understanding them allows us to understand the ways in which they may affect each other.

Immortality of the Soul

The idea of the soul as being distinct from the physical body is a theme present in almost every major religious tradition. For example, within Judaism the concept of the immortality of the soul is termed 'ha-nefesh' and is part of Jewish thought despite having no direct mention within their Holy Scriptures. Ideas of the immortality of the soul are manifested in Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism – to name a few!

The ways in which this manifests are different, but the core idea of an immortal soul is present in many religious or spiritual traditions which have a concept of an afterlife. Wittgenstein in *Investigations* distinguished the body and soul by stating the following: '*The body is the soul*'.

This belief posits that the soul or spirit is separate and not dependent on a physical body (living forever) and does not die in the same way as physical bodies do.

Formal philosophical discussion of the immortality of the soul is thought to have begun with Plato, whose beliefs regarding the continuity of movement of the soul (i.e. that a soul is immortal and moves through time) is thought to have heavily influenced Plato's more fleshed-out discussion in *Phaedrus*.

Plato's ideas regarding the immortality of the soul are important to consider; he addresses this theme throughout his philosophical works. Generally speaking, Plato believed in reincarnation and his belief in the immortal nature of the soul. Plato's *Phaedrus* is indeed widely considered as a key text on the immortality of the soul, is heavily influenced by his admiration of Socrates and is, therefore, heavily influenced by the thinking of Socrates. (However, this might be erroneous to state as the only real source of knowledge about Socrates is through Plato's writings. Some believe he was often just used within Plato's writing as a means to an end in order to communicate Plato's ideas.) His ideas can be divided into two types of argument: the **cyclical argument** and the **opposite argument**.

Plato put forward the idea that the immortality of the soul can be compared to the cycle of life. Just as the period of being awake must be followed by a period of sleep, so too must life be followed by death. That just as these periods repeat over and over, so too does life and death. This is an idea of how the immortality of the soul functions. He argues that all life is cyclical and that this is the structure for all time. Therefore, souls must reincarnate in order to participate in the cycle of life.

In his *Meno*, he argues that evidence for this is found in the various innate values that all humans possess. He does somewhat contradict this, however, indicating his belief that the soul is immortal but that at the point of the rebirth of the human soul, it cannot remember what the soul was before, therefore, needs to be taught again.

Furthermore, Plato argues that the soul is a pure entity – the body can be corrupted by disease or injury, but through this the soul remains intact. The only way in which the soul can be harmed is similar to the physical body is by negativity such as injustice. This, he argues, will harm the soul in the same way as disease does flesh. He argues that there is no evidence to draw the conclusion that harm the body such as disease would also harm a soul. There is also no evidence, however, to suggest that the soul is immortal.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



physical body, the host of a soul, results in the death of the soul itself. Therefore, immortal and is not affected by the morality of the body.

His second argument is termed the opposite argument. This rests on the premise of the world of change and the world of Forms. The world of change is the physical world. It is subject to change and subject to suffering death. The world of Forms is invisible and reflective, and rule over the physical. As matter within the world of souls, argues Plato. Therefore, souls are immortal.

Since Plato, there have been a variety of philosophers who have made the case for the immortality of the soul. These include the likes of Plotinus, Descartes, Leibnitz and Thomas Aquinas. In true Aquinas form, the latter developed 'ways' or 'proofs' from which he made the case for the immortality of the soul. They are as follows:

1. We are able in our minds to conceive of abstract ideas.
2. We have ideas of different realities that are not materially based.
3. We have a drive towards immaterial goals.
4. We are able to examine our known knowledge.
5. We want to live forever.
6. We have idea and stories about souls that have been consistently present throughout time.
7. We share an idea of moral law.

Reincarnation

The theme of reincarnation is not present in Abrahamic faiths, but it is a distinctive feature of Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. It is also present in the religion of ancient Egypt and Gnosticism. Within these different belief systems, the idea of reincarnation takes different forms, but the core idea remains the same – the soul continues to exist in another form.

In order to discuss the ideas of reincarnation, the case study example of the belief in Hinduism will be used so as to focus more on the aspect of reincarnation and less on the different religious beliefs.

Within Hinduism, the idea of reincarnation comes from the Vedas, which are holy scriptures believed to be revealed to the sages by God. The chain of life happens in continuous creation. Another term for the process is termed as rebirth at the beginning of each new life cycle, or as 'palingenesis'.

This is referred to within Hinduism as 'transmigration of souls'; if we break this term down, it refers to the understanding of how reincarnation is thought of within Hinduism. This view sees the soul as being reborn and manifests through different bodies within life cycles.

One soul may be a human, then a dog, then a horse, then an ant in multiple life cycles. The soul does not change. There are two components to human beings – the physical sharira (body) and the atman (soul). The sharira can perish and is subject to constant change, but the atman is immortal. Furthermore, an atman does not require a body to exist in and of itself. It can exist without flesh. There are only a few things that can actively affect the atman within Hindu thinking, which include karma (the actions of an individual and their resulting consequences) and avidya (translated as ignorance; the state of the atman before it achieves spiritual enlightenment).

The changes in the fate of a soul within this chain of life are viewed as being a consequence of your moral actions – a law which is known as Karma Samsara.

The repetitive chain of reincarnation from life to death to life is an indefinite fate – one can be liberated from this repeated cycle. The liberation is known as moksha.



1. Reincarnation is the process of the soul being reborn into a new body.
2. The soul is immortal and does not die with the body.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The soul as an entity is immortal and does not perish with the body. Life after death is just a continuity of life, but in another form – or, in some faiths, in another realm. It is the ways of thinking that are established through actions which impact upon the way in which an individual is reincarnated, rather than the result of some kind of moral scorekeeping.

Therefore, karma fits within the description as being a just way of thinking. It juxtaposes two opposite ideas of good and evil. It is worth remembering that while Buddhists do believe in karma as described, they do not believe in a soul but rather a transfer of karmic energy after death and rebirth.

The Bhagavad Gita posits that any suffering experienced by the soul comes from a lack of knowledge and that one needs to seek out knowledge in order to overcome this.

Rebirth

Rebirth is the notion that upon death, the nama rupa (name-form, made up of the four mental elements) is given a new body and is born again, possibly in the world or possibly in another realm. It emphasises the idea that no aspect of the previous being is transferred to the new one. A common example used to explain this is the lighting of a candle from another candle during which no substance travels from one to the other.

The end of the cycle of rebirth is known as nirvana. Nirvana is the Sanskrit phrase used largely by Mahayana, while nibbana is the phrase used by Theravada Buddhists.

To obtain this, individuals must understand the nature of ultimate reality. This involves fully understanding the nature of dukkha (suffering), annica (impermanence) and anatta (no-soul), the three marks of existence.

There is a similar notion within Buddhism but there is more emphasis on the intention behind moral actions. The outcomes of actions matter but the intention or intended outcome is more important.

Many spellings of these words differ based on which branch of Buddhist thought they are used in. There is a table overleaf to aid with this.

EXAM PREP

Draw up a table with reasons for and against belief in life after death. Do this for each of the four beliefs studied here. Decide whether you think the strengths outweigh the weaknesses or vice versa. Write two paragraphs explaining why.

Make flash cards for terminology for rebirth, with the terms and the terms

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



| Term in Pali/Sanskrit | Definition |
|-----------------------|--|
| dukkha/duhka | Suffering – in Buddhism all human experience is suffused with the 'three marks of existence' that need to be fully understood to obtain nirvana. |
| anicca/anitya | Impermanence – everything in this world is considered impermanent. It is one of the 'three marks of existence' that need to be fully understood to obtain nirvana. |
| four mental elements | Feeling, perception, thought and will and consciousness. These four elements are known as the four mental elements. |
| nama rupa | Form and matter. Made up of the four mental elements and the four material elements. |
| viññāṇa/vijñāna | Consciousness. |
| anattā/anātman | The doctrine of no-soul or no-self. It is the idea that there is no permanent notion of the self that is reborn. It is one of the 'three marks of existence' that need to be fully understood to obtain nirvana. |
| nibbana/nirvana | The end of rebirth. |

Replica Theory

Replica theory finds its roots in a thought experiment by John Hick.

He starts with the premise that it is difficult to conceive of the idea of the person's body. The concept we have of each other as being people is firmly rooted in the idea of ourselves within bodies. Therefore, if we conceive in the idea of people living in the afterlife after the point of death, it is logical to conclude that this must involve bodies.

There are, however, a few issues with this: the afterlife body must be different from the body we inhabit during life. Therefore, we would logically be in a different body to the one we inhabit in life. The difficulty comes with the idea of identity – how can we conceive of being ourselves in a body which is not our own?

This is the issue which Hick attempts to solve with replica theory.

Replica theory is explained by a series of three parts which explain Hick's thinking. The theory is changed in different ways, using analogy in order to convey the idea that Hick is proposing. The three parts will work within the afterlife.

This theory centres around the death of one particular man: the fictional John Smith. The three parts are designed to illustrate the meaning of replica theory.

1. John Smith dies, and is remembered by all his friends and family, who all remember his character that they enjoyed and what they loved about him. At the same time, an identical man, who somehow shares all of the traits of the original John Smith, appears. The original John Smith disappears. There are no differences between the deceased one, down to their DNA.

Do we accept the new John Smith as John Smith?

2. John Smith dies in America, and is buried by his friends and family – however, a new John Smith appears with the same traits, personality, DNA and physical appearance as John Smith from both the corpse of the first John Smith, and a new John Smith who is identical to the first.

Do we accept this John Smith in India as John Smith?

3. John Smith dies in the UK, and at the same time, a John Smith with every single personality trait as the UK John Smith appears in a different world.

Do we accept this John Smith as being John Smith?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Get into groups and discuss the hypothesis of replica theory. In which of the theories do you consider the new John Smith to be John Smith? Why? Share your thoughts.

It is important to note before going further into analysing this topic, that the theory of replica theory is not a copy. It is a one-to-one identity relation, not a copy. Replica theory arises from a materialist perspective rather than a dualist one, which is much more in keeping with scientific perspectives.

Replica theory as put forward by John Hick has a variety of strengths and ways in which it works, however, there are also a variety of flaws and criticisms.

Strengths:

- Within the vacuum of the thought experiment, this works logically. Towards the end of supporting religious beliefs with logical argument, this fits with teaching and Christian beliefs such as 1 Corinthians 15.
- It works well with **Irenaeus' theodicy**; this is a theory put forward by Saint Irenaeus, a philosopher, in order to justify the problem of suffering. He argues that in order to become more like God, evil and suffering must exist as these things help our souls to develop.
- Therefore, it also fits well with Hick's own theory of 'soul-making'; this is a modification of Irenaeus' theodicy. He argued that God created humans with unperfected souls, which is necessary in the development of humans for them to become perfect. Therefore, evil and suffering as it has a purpose. While this theory itself is debatable, it does provide a logical basis.
- By stipulating only one replica at a time, Hick somewhat avoids the potential for multiple identity which would have resulted in a paradox, rendering the thought experiment impossible.

Weaknesses:

- Peter Vardy critiques this idea on the basis of value – he argues that a copy of the original is not the original. For example, the painting *Starry Night* is incredibly valuable, but a copy has less value. In the same way, a replica or a copy of a human being is not as valuable as the original. Vardy counters this by stressing that the replica is singular – there is only one as one person can only be one person. You cannot be multiple people at the same time. However, he argues, is no longer a person – it is no longer the 'you' you were when alive. This makes it impossible for replica theory to work in the instance of death.
- Paul Davies argues that replica theory offers little in the way of comfort – should you die at the point of death, this does not change the simple fact that you have died. Hick counters this by stipulating that there can only be one replica at a time, which can continue to exist after the original has died. Only one can exist at a time. This rebuttal, however, does little to address the issue of identity.
- There is also the issue of identity and continuity – the stark issue of the concept of the fallacy that if there is a break in continuity between the former self and the replica, then the replica is not the 'self'. The two individuals cannot be the same because the second is a replica and not the original.
- There are also issues with dualism. Hick himself was not a dualist. Hick placed the original at a time; while this is a condition of the thought experiment, if we take this further, then the thought experiment it does not work. If there are multiple replicas then they can all share one identity, and at this point they cease to be the same person.
- Brian Davies – he argues that a copy can never be a copy! The inherent self is changed as the replica is not the original. He states in his 1982 work *An Introduction to Religion* that, 'for the continued existence of a person, more is required than the mere copying of the original'.
- Hick himself modified his argument in 2009 stating that 'There does however seem to be some people who die in infancy, some as the result of an accidental war in early adult age, most in old age....so a resurrected woman in her eighties dying of cancer in her eighties dying of cancer. And likewise with everyone else. Are we, then, in order to be miraculously to be cured of all diseases and do we suddenly grow younger, old again? This is no doubt possible but it complicates this theory to a point at which it ceases to be even plausible'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Resurrection

Resurrection as a concept has taken many forms of manifestation within society and philosophical thought. Resurrection is the concept of life returning to the body or the break is clear – life has both ended and been returned to the deceased.

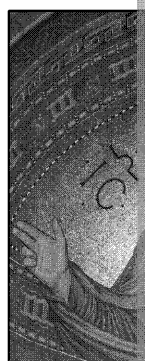
The first religious connotation that comes to the mind of most Westerners is the resurrection of Christ, the central figure in the Christian faith, resurrected from the dead three days after his crucifixion on a Roman cross. Bodily resurrection also plays a role in other religious faiths such as Islam and Judaism.

There are ideas within Christianity regarding the different states of bodies dependent on their destination, these are termed 'qualities':

- Impassibility – they are physically beyond the pain and suffering experienced in earthly life.
- Glory/brightness – to experience this requires a body; however, this is described in different ways.
- Powerful – their heavenly bodies are freed from the feeble limits of earthly bodies.

The idea of bodily resurrection posed a problem for philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas who needed to somehow marry this idea with Aristotle's ideas of the importance and immortality of the soul.

It is not an idea that is solely tied to Christianity, as other religions, such as Judaism and Islam contain ideas of resurrection. Many Jews believe that when Elijah comes, following him will be the Messiah who will begin a Messianic Age which will involve a resurrection of the dead.



Within Islam, ideas of resurrection are tied to the Day of Judgement.

There are a number of questions raised by the ideas of resurrection, ones which will remain largely unanswered. Some religious people have themselves answered the questions, but they are controversial; however, this has not yet satisfied philosophical thought because the questions raised include:

- A physical resurrection would mean a physical heaven. What would that be like? What are the boundaries? What is the climate?
- Would heavenly bodies be affected in the same way that human, worldly bodies are?
- Will we be perfect, without the flaws which almost every single human being has?
- Philosopher Peter Cole questioned, 'If Christians are in a physical, resurrected environment, will they have to queue to see Jesus?'²⁴

Many Christians posit a response to some of these questions, such as positing that in the afterlife, which all suffering will be alleviated – ergo, perfect bodies. We will, however, in the end, be able to recognise each other despite these physical changes, as this ability will be

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**

²⁴ Cole, Peter, *Philosophy of Religion*, Hodder Murray, 1999

Quick Quiz

1. What is meant by the term 'immortality of the soul'?
.....
2. What is meant by the term 'rebirth'?
.....
3. What is meant by the term 'reincarnation'?
.....
4. What is meant by the term 'replica theory'?
.....
5. What is meant by the term 'resurrection'?
.....
6. What is the difference between the world of change and the world of Form?
.....
.....
7. What is meant by the term 'palingenesis'?
.....
8. What is the term for the end of the cycles of rebirth?
.....
9. Who put forward replica theory?
.....
10. What are the three qualities regarding resurrection?
.....
.....

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



6.2 Points for Discussion about Life after Death

Relationship between Mind and Body

The philosophical debate regarding the relationship between mind and body is once again an issue rich in complexities. The issue boils down to the argument between whether or not our mind and body are one entity and whether or not they are separate entities.

Within ideas of mind and body separation there are a variety of terms which are important to highlight. The first two include **dualism** and **monism**, with variations on both including ideas such as substance dualism and materialism.

This poses a philosophical question regarding the self – are the mind and the body impact upon concepts of the self?

The main terms within discussion of mind and body are defined as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Dualism | The dualist view holds that human beings as an entity are composed of two aspects – that mind and body are separate facets of human beings. |
| Substance dualism | The substance dualist view holds that human beings as an entity are a combination of two substances, positing that mind and body are separate. |
| Monism | The monist view holds that human beings as an entity are composed of one aspect, but rather one. |
| Materialism | The materialist view holds that human beings as an entity are composed of one substance which is the same regardless of whether or not one is discussing the mind or the body. |

Plato and Aristotle are two key players within the discussion of this issue. A common philosophy was the recurrent belief that the soul is separate from the body. It is important to note that the idea of soul has garnered certain connotations within society. Plato and Aristotle's views predate the spread of these faiths and, therefore, constitute a different perspective from what we might understand today. Furthermore, the word 'soul' is often translated into English as 'soul'. Translation here is a key issue regarding mind and body, however for the sake of this discussion we will assume they are the same.

As discussed previously within this resource, Plato viewed the soul as being immortal and belonged to the world of Forms, rather than the world of change where the body and soul (mind) are different entities made up of different substances. This is a dualist view.

Aristotle placed a large amount of importance in the soul. The presence of the soul within a body, for Aristotle, was the differentiating factor between a dead body and a live body. It is the thing that makes a person a person. He was also a dualist, in agreement in this way with Plato.

DISCUSSION

How might Aristotle's view of the soul be challenged by the persistent vegetative state?

Property dualism is a popular modern form of dualism to which many theologians subscribe. It is a philosophical view that posits that the world is made of just one physical substance, but that there exist in the world different kinds of substance – the physical and the mental. This view allows for the understanding of the physical world while allowing for the existence of the mind beyond the physical.

Religious individuals typically posit dualism as a way of explaining how life after death is possible. If there is no evidence for dualism within scientific realms, it could be argued that some religions are more rooted in science than religion is more likely to hold a monist view of the world than a dualist view. The one physical entity of matter that we can experience empirically is able to be tested.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The Afterlife and Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning is a field of study within psychology. It refers to the examination of how people make decisions within a situation informed by their use of reason in order to ascertain what should be done to do is in any given situation.

This requires the ability for human beings to identify the need for a moral choice and then to make a moral judgement.

When this interacts with the topic of the afterlife, is this a discussion surrounding the existence of an afterlife or is it dependent on belief in an afterlife?

For example, if a religion or worldview places an emphasis on making moral choices and being rewarded in an afterlife, then does this make the moral choice not fully moral, as it is based on a moral sense of duty but rather the desire to be rewarded in an afterlife?

Also, if a non-religious person does not believe in an afterlife, or a God, or anything that exists beyond what we experience in the world on a day-to-day basis, then what is the implication for moral choices? Does this have an effect? Are moral choices necessary for these discussions within society and academia.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

Discuss with your neighbour to what extent beliefs about the afterlife might impact on moral reasoning. Do your beliefs impact your moral reasoning? Why? Why not?

Near-death Experiences

The experiences of those who claim to have almost experienced the great mystery of death are of great interest to the discussion of life after death. There have been many recorded instances that have been resuscitated after their heart stopping and a cessation of brain activity (the flat case). Often these experiences are commonalities.

Before going further on this topic it is important to underline that near-death experiences can be religious or non-religious. They should, therefore, be viewed through the lens of religion as previously discussed in this course.

Near-death experiences (NDEs) have become so well known in our society that countless theories have emerged from their experience – for example, ‘my whole life flashed before my eyes’. These theories as to what could be awaiting us after death. People have reported multiple experiences of this phenomenon – including the feeling of leaving their bodies or travelling through a ‘tunnel’.

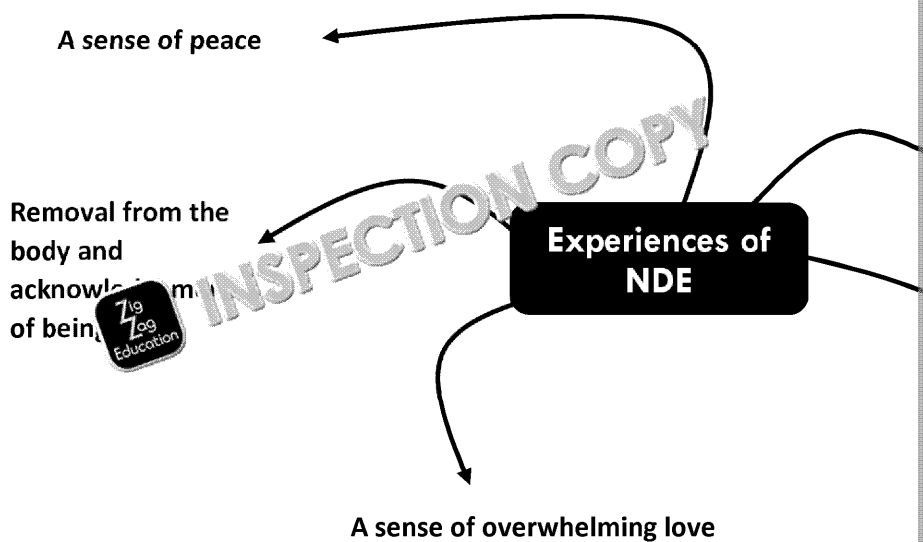
As an example of a NDE, the TedXTalk by Mr Lewis Brown Griggs describes his two near-death experiences. The first example describes himself crashing his car, after which his spirit disassociates from his body and enters a little white tornado, leaving behind the car and his physical body. His experience is one of the most near-death experiences – an awareness of the separation of the body, an awareness of a higher realm and a return to life with a regenerated sense of purpose. He describes pure joy and peace as also recurrent themes within those who have professed to have had an NDE.

A familiar theme also experienced by Mr Brown Griggs is a marked change in his personality after his experience.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Common experiences among those who have experienced an NDE are the following:



Scientifically speaking, near-death experiences are described as being disturbance of the body, usually manifesting in more than one sense (e.g. the experiencer will not just physically feel it too) which have limited explanation as to why they occur and how the phenomenon they have particular interest for the scientific and psychological community. They happen, and what causes them?

Kenneth Ring, American Psychology professor and one of the founders of the International Association for Near-Death Studies, posits that there is a general set of five 'continuums' among those who have NDEs. These are:

1. The feeling of peace
2. The feeling of separation of the spirit from the body
3. The feeling of entering darkness
4. The seeing of a light
5. Entering the light

He does note that the fifth continuum is far less common. Ring has also noted the nature of experience among those who have had an NDE by 'dying' in a similar way to how survivors of attempted suicide are likely to report a feeling of experience of the 'end of the tunnel' phenomenon.

Dr Raymond Moody first introduced the term near-death experience in his 1975 book 'Life After Life'. He talks about NDEs within the context of psychology. He identifies the following experience of an NDE:

- A. The feeling of peace
- B. An out-of-body experience
- C. Moving through an area of darkness, such as a tunnel
- D. Awareness of a light at the end of the tunnel
- E. Coming into contact with a bright being made of light
- F. Seeing your life flash before your eyes
- G. Seeing a beautiful place separate from the world we know

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



DISCUSSION POINT

Do you think near-death experiences are a supernatural phenomenon or support belief in something more than the human experience?

How do you think this might play a role in an argument about belief in deities?

Near-death experiences are not without their criticisms, however. Some critiques

- Only a very small percentage of people who have almost died have experienced NDEs.
- Knowledge of the characteristics of NDEs might be so well known that the experience then itself could have an impact on how it is experienced, e.g. the 'light at the end of the tunnel' is so well known that this might result in more people expecting and then experiencing it.
- These experiences could be simply the result of hallucinations.
- Biologically, it has been proved that depriving the brain of oxygen, as occurs in cardiac arrest, can lead to hallucinations. This could explain the phenomenon of a near-death experience.
- Some attempts to recreate the effects of a near-death experience by causing hypoxia within the brain have had results which suggest this could be the cause as the person reports a near-death experience.
- A personality change as a result of an NDE is too tenuous to be considered to be evidence of a supernatural event.
- An internal reality does not necessarily equal an external reality.
- Barry Beyerstein argues that *Life After Life* is a flawed reading of psychology.
- James Alcock criticises Moody, stating that he 'appears to ignore a great deal of evidence with hallucinating experiences in general'.²⁵



ACTIVITY

Using the Internet, find different near-death experiences posited by people who believe in death experiences. Record these and find the common themes, and write down any differences that you might observe.



To what extent do you think that the commonalities contribute to proof of a supernatural event? Do the differences disprove the validity of the experience?

Role of Evidence

Evidence is one of the hallmarks of modern society as a basis for how we in modern society make decisions. It is commonly seen as the way via which proof of claim or a belief can be established. Claims which are proved by evidence are believed to be true, and claims which cannot be backed up by evidence are believed to be false.

There are a variety of differing views within the context of philosophy of religion. Within discussions concerning philosophy of religion. To what extent evidence can be used to prove or disprove a claim is discussed, is debated.

John Locke argues that the only opinions worth having are those supported by evidence.

Clifford held the view that it was wrong to believe something without evidence. He used the example of an aeroplane taking off to explain his thought: if you believe that an aeroplane taking off has an issue which could cause it to crash, but you have no evidence to support this claim,



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



²⁵ James Alcock (1981). 'Psychology and Near-Death Experiences'. In Kendrick Frazier. *Paranormal Beliefs*. Books.

William James argued that in some instances, beliefs which have a lack of evidence of truth behind a claim is not necessarily reliant on the presence of truth. There are many beliefs that we make on a daily basis that are made with no evidence provided.

Davies argued the following points regarding the use of evidence:

- Some beliefs are impossible to be proved, and, therefore, no evidence can be provided.
- We often accept information without the need for proof (e.g. if your mum tells you that the car has run out, you will generally accept this as true without having to double-check). Not all claims necessitate backing up with evidence.
- We use the word 'belief' to refer to things which have not been proved, and things which are not therefore, we need to be careful about what we are discussing during debates.
- Some people can prove things so far – we can prove Jesus existed, for example. Theologians and scholars accept this as a historical fact. However, what is disputed is whether or not this can be conclusively proved.

Therefore, religious language regarding evidence is important to consider. Consider how a religious person might use language to convey their ideas that they might consider as evidence. For example, a religious individual might use a specific way of talking about an event to suggest that the event was a miracle. However, someone who is not religious will be unlikely to accept this because they are arguing from two different viewpoints, and, if one takes the view that there are two different languages with different rules. Within the rules of religious language, something might be accepted as proof and evidence for an already-held belief, whereas outside of this community this would not be the case. Therefore, it is difficult for these two methods to effectively discuss evidence as a concept as they each have differing ideas of what constitutes evidence and what constitutes effective evidence.

Furthermore, let us consider the role of evidence in modern society and the way in which the reality of modern life and with previously discussed concepts from this course come into play. Relevant to this include whether or not empirical evidence of the soul, or indeed the existence of God, is possible. And the question of what would constitute such evidence, and what would be required for a person may not be considered as proof by another. If an individual has a religious experience, they may consider this to be evidence of an afterlife as due to their experience they are uttering words of an afterlife. However, such forms of evidence be admissible if they cannot be verified by others. That people are able to believe in ideas which have been contradicted by modern science is a problem.



ACTIVITY

1. Research some examples where individuals have attempted to back up their religious beliefs with evidence.
2. Discuss how useful you think the evidence they provided is, as well as how others outside their religious belief found it to be. Consider why there may be differences in opinion.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Quick Quiz

1. What is dualism?
.....
2. What is substance dualism?
.....
3. What is monism?
.....
4. What is materialism?
.....
5. What impact might belief in an afterlife have on moral reason?
.....
6. What is a near-death experience?
.....
7. What are Kenneth Ring's five-stage continuums?
.....
8. Give one criticism of the idea of a near-death experience.
.....
9. Give one strength of the idea of near-death experience.
.....
10. What is the view of William James on evidence?
.....

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



6.3 Religion and Scientific Debates

Anyone who reads a newspaper or studies ideas surrounding religion in the modern world will find that religion and science are, supposedly, at war. In articles and curriculums and discussions, they are constantly opposed as rivals vying for the minds of the masses. There is debate, but the two are necessarily diametrically opposed. It is a bit of a false dichotomy, in the end.

Modern atheists such as Richard Dawkins have often adopted the narrative that science and religion are two opposing schools of thought and belief which are mutually opposed. Other scholars, such as theist and scientist Alistair McGrath, however, believe that science and religion can co-exist. They see the thoughts and belief systems of individuals as being in dialogue with each other.

NOMA is a term which is connected to the idea of the conflict between religion and science. It stands for **Non-Overlapping Magisteria**, which is an idea posited by **Stephen Jay Goulds**. Gould perceived a problem – that the two have jurisdictions of facts, so to speak, that do not overlap. Science is concerned with the facts and the ‘hows’ of life. Religion, however, is concerned with the ‘whys’.

Methodologies on Observation

In order to make an argument, usually there is the need for some form of evidence. In the case of the debate between science and religion.

The scientific method is the most common way to observe and test evidence. This is a process that involves the following steps:

1. An individual observes something within nature or within life.
2. The individual forms an idea based on this observation – this is known as a hypothesis.
3. The hypothesis posited by the individual should be tested to see whether or not it is true, usually through experimentation.
4. A conclusion can be drawn from the carrying out of the testing (experimental results).

This is use of **empiricism**. It is experiencing what can be observed and tested. The face of testing is one of the benchmarks of the scientific method – a hypothesis is tested. This is where the issue regarding truth and methods of garnering information comes in. What one might consider a test, the other might not.

For example, a religious believer might consider a miracle to be a way of observing God. If a miracle occurs then surely something must have caused it and, therefore, this would be God. However, a non-believer may not consider this proof of God, and instead perceive the event took place in order to explain the event.

It is worth considering also that there is a lot of debate about the scientific method and how useful it is. The question is raised as to whether or not it is the role of scientists to empirically falsify or verify theories.



ACTIVITY

Use an example of a fact which has been observed and tested using the scientific method. Put the fact at the centre of a diagram and use the scientific method to show how it can be verified or falsified.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**

STARTER ACTIVITY

Research a miracle that has happened in the UK recently. Write a short report explaining:

- How was it reported in the media? Was it taken seriously?
- How did different people react? Who believed and who didn't? What reactions did you see?
- For people who believed in the miracle, what did they do? What did it mean to them?

Different definitions of miracles

The word 'miracle' is used quite frequently in everyday language. Journalists might describe a football team being miraculously able to win a match after being 3–0 down at half-time. It is also used to describe something very special or important, e.g. a jackfruit was called a 'miracle' food by *The Guardian* because it is healthy instead of other crops which are struggling due to climate change.²⁶

In a theological context, however, a miracle is considered to be an extraordinary event caused by something of himself.

The nature of these extraordinary events varies, and there is disagreement about what should be considered miracles.

Here are three different definitions and categorisations of miracles:

1 A common definition of a miracle is one which conforms to two principles:

1. It must be contrary to our understanding of the laws of nature. Swinburne defines miracles as 'impossible' events that change how we understand natural laws to work.
2. It must have a purpose and religious significance. S E Evans defined miracles as 'Obviously the miracles of a religion, such as Christianity are not merely events that happen, but they have a function and purpose and usually that function is a revelatory one.'

2 Thomas Aquinas outlined three categories or ranks of miracle:

1. Events that could never happen naturally and can only be brought about by God, e.g. the parting of the Red Sea. This is similar to the first principle above.
2. Events that could happen naturally, but which only God could have brought about, e.g. curing a blind person who could previously see, or restoring order or in that timescale, e.g. curing a blind person who could previously see someone from an illness.
3. Events that do happen naturally but which God does without the use of miracles, e.g. instantly healing a sick person.

3 An alternative categorisation of miraculous events is:

1. Events which break with the laws of nature, e.g. the sun falling out of the sky, walking on water, raising someone from the dead
2. Events which are extremely unlikely, e.g. a spring suddenly drying up, a leg healing instantaneously
3. A coincidence, e.g. praying for rain and it starts raining

Improbable

Something that is unlikely to happen given past experience or scientific thinking based on evidence and reason.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



²⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/apr/23/jackfruit-miracle-crop-climate>

Other definitions:

- Paul Tillich: *'an event which is astonishing, unusual, shaking and without control of reality... an event which points to the mystery of being'*.
- John Macquarrie: *'a miracle is an event that excites wonder... it is believed to be achieved in a special way... and intends to achieve some special end by it'*.
- More controversial definitions of miracles have been put forward by Brian Davies: *'unexpected and fortuitous events in the light of which we are disposed to give an inclusive definition and includes events, such as lucky coincidences, that Aquinas would not regard as miracles'*. It also suggests that even 'natural' miracles, such as the parting of the Red Sea, are 'contingent', rather than something more significant.
- R F Holland defines a miracle as an extraordinary coincidence that is interpreted as significant. The definition of a miracle depends on how witnesses interpret the miracle itself or whether a natural law is broken (there is more on Holland in the next section).

There is an important distinction that needs to be made between realist and anti-realist views of miracles is that a miracle has truly taken place because of an act of God and viewed as such, and it can be understood by anyone. An anti-realist view of miracles can only be understood in the context of the individual faith (form of life) of the person experiencing. Ergo, if a miracle is experienced by a Christian (or a Christian believer) then they will project their knowledge and concepts of God and religion onto the interpretation.

Miracles in the Bible

There are many different miracles discussed in the Bible. They range from Moses walking on water and performing healings. The ultimate miracle is Jesus' resurrection three days after he had been crucified.

Miracles are often referred to as signs in the New Testament because they were done by Jesus, who God was.

There is theological and religious meaning and purpose behind the biblical miracles:

- to enable people to know God better
- to demonstrate the ways God wants to achieve his plan for the world
- to show that God is **immanent** (active and involved in the world)
- to demonstrate God's **omnipotence** (God as all-powerful)
- to demonstrate God's **omnibenevolence** and his love for humanity
- to explain and show Jesus' nature, e.g. as the Messiah
- to help explain Jesus' teaching and bring people to faith
- to show what God's kingdom will be like, e.g. that the blind will see

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Philosophical Problems

David Hume (1711–1776)

David Hume was a Scottish philosopher who famously refuted the idea of miracles in his essay 'Of Miracles' in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. He considered miracles to be irrational because of the high **improbability** and lack of evidence of miracles occurring.

He defined a miracle as:

a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition [will] of the Deity

Hume considered the probability of miracles taking place to be very low. He held on the basis of **natural laws** had been proved as constant and unchanging, and, therefore, very improbable or unlikely to be broken. He considered that it will always be more likely that the witness to a miracle is mistaken or lying because of how unlikely that a miracle could take place.

He put forward two parts to his view on miracles. The first puts forward an argument of testimony – when choosing to believe a miracle or not, the evidence will always be more likely to remain inviolable than for a miracle report, where the person could be mistaken. *a priori*, as Hume does acknowledge there may be some incredible circumstance but it will not outweigh evidentially natural laws.

Hume moves on to give four **a posteriori** (from experience) reasons for why there is no miracle.

1. Miracles are never witnessed by a sufficient number of people and are not witnessed by 'unquestioned good sense, education and learning'.
2. Miracles are often witnessed by religious believers, who are particularly unreliably. Faith leads them to naturally want to see miracles, which distorts their perception.
3. Miracles are witnessed in 'ignorant and barbarous nations'.
4. Different religions all claim that miracles prove the exclusive truth of their beliefs. Hume considered this inconsistency to cancel out the truth claims of all witnesses.

Overall, Hume defines a miracle as an event which breaks the laws of nature, but is not rational and certain. He is not rational to believe, that such an event could happen.

General Analysis of Hume

- The improbability of a miracle does not mean it could not happen; he has not only that it is improbable. It might even make the probability of it being a divine act more likely because of the difficulty of explaining the miracle as being due to any human cause.
- Hume does not explain why the testimony of religious believers should be considered more unreliable than that of anyone else. A religious believer would be just as likely to want to be sure their experience was miraculous and truly pointed to God. They might also be more likely to identify what constitutes the hand of God than someone with no familiarity with religion.
- Some miracles have been witnessed by many people (e.g. the Miracle of the Sun) and some by educated people, e.g. the university scientist who witnessed the Miracle of the Sun.
- Hume ignores the meaning that miracles can have beyond a literal interpretation. The interpretation of biblical miracles, for example, is often imbued in miracles considered as metaphors.
- The inconsistency outlined in Hume's fourth reason could be resolved by denying that different religions are true or they are all different versions of the same truth. Similar to how a Christian God might perform miracles to non-Christian believers and non-Christian gods could be maintained. Mackie notes that this argument 'has less force than the claim that different religions have toned down their hostility to one another'.²⁷

²⁷ Mackie, J L, *Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) p. 15.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Analysis of Hume's View of Natural Laws

Swinburne argues that Hume's view of natural laws could be critiqued on the basis of objective facts but descriptions of how we think the world works. Therefore, when we accept that natural laws work differently to how we thought previously. Occurrences are unlikely, but miracles are inherently unlikely events. If they happened all the time, they would be miracles! Miracles are, however, one-off occasions so it is unlikely that one can think natural laws work normally. Science can, therefore, not really remain the same.

W Pannenburg holds a similar view that natural laws are broken but are one-off events. If laws are meaningless:

The concept of miracles has often been regarded as irreconcilable with the concept of natural laws. It appears only to an understanding of a miracle as a break of natural laws. A miracle cannot be conceived in this way... [instead] as unusual events that are outside of the course of nature but not nature itself... It is sufficient to regard unusual occurrences as 'signs' of God's special activity in creation.²⁸

Stephen Evans disagrees with Swinburne's interpretation of Hume and argues that Hume simply meant that a miracle was an exception to the normal processes of nature and, therefore, does not misunderstand the nature of natural laws.

EXAM

'Hume shows that it is impossible to believe in miracles.' Create a spider diagram with reasons for and against this claim.



ACTIVITY

Read this testimony of a miracle:

The 'Miracle of the Sun' took place in Fatima, Portugal in 1917. Here is a testimony from José Maria de Almeida Garrett, professor at the Faculty of Sciences of Coimbra:

I could see the sun, like a very clear disc, with its sharp edge, which gleamed in my sight... it kept its light and heat, and stood out clearly in the sky, with a brightness like a gaming table. The most astonishing thing was to be able to stare at the sun so long, so brilliant with light and heat, without hurting the eyes or damaging the retina. I saw changes of colour in the atmosphere. Looking at the sun, I noticed that everything darkened... everything had assumed an amethyst colour... Then, suddenly, the sun seemed all at once to loosen itself from the firmament and, blood red, appeared over the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight.

Using the views of the scholars you have studied, and your own opinions, do you believe this miracle took place and reasons to believe it didn't. The debate between Swinburne and Pannenburg are likely to be particularly useful in developing your answer.

¹<http://www.fatima.org/essentials/facts/miracle.asp>

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



²⁸ Pannenburg, W (2002), 'The Concept of Miracle' *Zygon*, 37, pp. 759–762.

John Locke (1632–1704)

Locke defined a miracle as an event which is interpreted by the witnesses to be connected to the divine:

A miracle then I take to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of human reason, and contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him who observes it to be the work of God.

It therefore depends on the opinion of the witnesses as to whether something breaks the laws of nature.

Locke believes that to be certain of a miracle 'it is necessary to know that the messenger that delivers it is a man in God'. He says that, with the examples of Jesus as soon as one witnesses the miracle of him calming a storm at sea, it is such a miracle that one 'cannot but receive his doctrine'.³⁰

He says that an event should not be considered a miracle if it is not consistent and praising of God, because God would not send someone to perform such a miracle 'that no mission can be looked on to be divine, that delivers anything derogating from the honour of... God'.

Similarly, an event should not be believed to be a miracle if there are 'marks of a superior and over-ruling power', i.e. more impressive miracles. This is because God would not allow himself to be 'usurped' (outdone) by an 'inferior being'.³¹

R F Holland: Extraordinary coincidences

Holland defines a miracle as 'an extraordinary coincidence that is interpreted as having broken the laws of nature'. Holland gives the example of a child playing with a toy motor car at a train crossing. The train driver in the train approaching the child then suddenly loses control of the car. This causes the train to stop automatically, just before he reaches the child. This is a lucky coincidence but the cause seems to be the driver, not God. The child's mother insists the event is a miracle because of its significance for her.

Whether an event is considered a miracle will, therefore, vary from person to person. It is a matter of divine interpretation, considering miracles instead to be coincidences, which are part of everyday experience.

Gareth Moore: Miracles as being done by 'no-one'

Gareth Moore took a different approach to understanding the nature of a miracle. He argued that God is 'no-one'. What Moore means by this is that God is not knowable, at least not in the sense that other humans are knowable. Talking about God is very different from talking about the things of this world for which we can use everyday language. God is neither somebody nor something; God is nothing and nobody. 'God does what nobody does; God causes what nothing causes'.³² Therefore, it is not possible to make positive statements about miracles. We can only say that there is no other explanation for the event apart from God. 'Miracle' is a special term within religious language to describe these events.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



²⁹ Locke, J 'A Discourse of Miracles' (1706) in J Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 114.

³⁰ Locke, J, p. 116.

³¹ Locke, J, p. 118.

³² Gareth Moore OP, *Believing in God*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, p. 223.

Richard Swinburne (1934–): Evidence in support of miracles

Swinburne argued that there is evidence of miracles from the historical evidence of

1. our memory of miracles
2. the testimony of others that miracles took place
3. the physical traces left behind by the miracle
4. the results of miracles could also be considered evidence (e.g. an unexplained sudden healing or the change in attitude of the experimenter (e.g. Nicky Cruz – see above))

Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity can also be applied here:

Principle of testimony – unless there is evidence otherwise, we should believe what testimony tells us. If we saw a miracle they saw, on the basis that people generally tell the truth, of course they are not always telling the truth, but generally they do, so we will be better believing them.

Principle of credulity – unless there is evidence otherwise, we should believe that things are as they seem to be; thousands of people claim to have seen a miracle so we should accept that they probably did witness a miracle as they claim. Of course, they might be mistaken, but it is unlikely that so many people were mistaken. We could all be mistaken about lots of things, but we accept that the things we see are real.

These are very handy arguments to remember for your exam! Swinburne is attempting to show that it is probable that miracles happen. He is not attempting to prove that they happen but that if the evidence available should be accepted and, when it is, it suggests that it is likely miracles happen.

Maurice Wiles (1923–2005): Against miracles on the grounds of morality

Wiles takes a very different approach to Hume in arguing that miracles do not take place on the basis of science or rationality as Hume had, arguing that 'the notion of miracle cannot be supported on scientific grounds as logically impossible in the world we know is not a closed, self-contained system'.

Instead, Wiles argues that miracles are based on **morality**. He considered that if God did intervene about miracles, then God would be immoral. God would have brought about the resurrection of the blind man, but he would have chosen not to intervene to stop atrocities, e.g. the Holocaust or Hiroshima. Wiles felt that bringing about relatively trivial miracles could not be justified by the horrendous suffering that was not stopped.

Wiles also argued that it would be impossible for God to break natural laws all the time, as it would lead to chaos in which we would not understand how the world works or be able to live in it.

Wiles concludes that there are three options: either God intervenes all the time and there is chaos, God intervenes sometimes and God is seemingly unfair and partial, or God does not intervene in the world. Wiles argues that it must be the third reason. God created the world but does not intervene in it and does not bring about miracles. It is, therefore, more important that God is just and omnibenevolent than that he brings about miracles.

EXAM TIP

Do you find the principle of credulity as convincing as grounds for belief? Draw up and fill in the 'for' and 'against' column.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Analysis

- Wiles' argument is inconsistent with biblical accounts which make it clear that miracles happen in the world. The miracles described in the Bible are also depicted as religiously significant in the Bible (see above) and so cannot simply be dismissed.
- It is wrong to say that if God did only intervene in particular cases he would be inconsistent with classical theism to be supremely morally perfect, even if this takes a form we cannot understand in our fallen state. To judge God is to judge by our own human standards, not to determine morality.
- Wiles misunderstands the purpose of miracles, which is not necessarily to tell us something about God and to have religious significance. God may, therefore, have allowed the Holocaust because if he had not, it would have stopped people believing in him. It might not have been the appropriate way for God to reveal himself.

EXAM

Does Maurice Wiles's concept of miracles is important? Fill in a table with a 'for' and 'against' column.



ACTIVITY

Use your knowledge of the discussions of methodologies and apply this to the question: Can we verify miracles? Could there be scientific investigation of miracles? What would it look like?

Write down your thoughts in answer to the questions here in bullet-point form.

Creation Themes and Scientific Cosmologies

Cosmologies are theories about where the universe came from. A similar word is 'cosmology'. The argument of Creationism, which posits God as creator and first cause of the universe, is a religious belief. They have links. There are many different ideas regarding the origin of the universe and how it came about, the discussion of which has found itself at the heart of debate between religion and science.

Scientific Cosmologies

Scientific cosmologies are scientific theories about where the universe came from. There are several different theories; however, the most commonly accepted theory regarding the origin of the universe is the Big Bang theory.

Big Bang theory is the most dominant and best-known cosmology within scientific cosmologies. The universe is approximately 13.8 billion years old.

The theory has its origins in the observation that there was movement within the universe. It appears, through observation, to be moving outwards from a central point, away from which it is expanding, which would indicate a **central point**.

Einstein's posited theory of general relativity has given some support indirectly to the Big Bang theory.

This theory posits that **14 billion years ago** (give or take) that central point was a **singularity** of infinite **energy** which was very hot and dense.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



This small ball of energy expanded very quickly. According to famed physicist Stephen Hawking, this hot concentrated ball of energy and matter did not expand into space which was already there, but this rapid expansion created the space which it occupied. According to Hawking, this was the point at which both space and time came into being, which is termed within the scientific community as the **Big Bang**.

Before this point, according to the theory, there was **nothing**.

Some scientists believe that this event was entirely random, but there are also those who ascribe to this event a reason or a cause.

The theory is based entirely on **empiricism** (due to the observation of the movement of galaxies) and depends on a number of a priori assumptions, such as the cosmological principle.

It has, however, been given evidentiary basis in subsequent research such as the discovery of the speed of galaxies moving away from one another as well as the discovery of background radiation. This is argued to support the theory of the Big Bang on the basis that the movement outwards from a singular point would indicate that there had to be an initial movement – this being the Big Bang.

There is also a phenomenon known as the red shift which gives basis for the Big Bang theory. The observance of patterns of light. This is a finding from the scientific discipline of physics. When light from an individual, it shifts away from the blue end of the spectrum towards the red end. This light within the universe gives scientific basis to suggest that the universe is moving away from a central point. Furthermore, it was been observed that this movement away from a central point is at an expansion rate. This observation is often used to support the Big Bang theory.

The cosmological constant (density of the value of energy within the universe) being a constant effect was thought by thinkers such as Einstein to be zero, but the discovery of the expansion of the universe would be impossible for this to be so.

There are also alternative theories about the way in which the observation of the universe can be interpreted. One example of this is known as the steady state theory, which was proposed by Hoyle. It posits that the density of matter in the universe remains the **same despite the expansion** because the matter within the universe is being continually created in order to balance the expansion (and, therefore, would theoretically be making the matter thinner).

The **Gaia hypothesis** was first posited by chemist James Lovelock and Lyn Margulis. It is named after the Greek goddess Gaia, who represented Earth. It's a theory which posits the idea of the world as sustaining. Broadly speaking, it rests on the ideas of the self-sustaining nature of the world as functioning in such a way as to make the **world able to sustain itself**. Examples of this include such as the current global temperature, seawater salinity and oxygen in the atmosphere.

These ideas don't necessarily fit within the boundaries of the first law of thermodynamics, but they do fit the Big Bang theory strictly. The background radiation observation of the Hubble Space Telescope supports the Big Bang theory.

The theory of evolution is another scientific theory which was posited to explain the way in which the world observe it today has come to be. Evolution is a theory posited by biologist **Charles Darwin** in his book **Origin of Species**, published in 1859. In it, he put forward what is now understood as **evolution** via a process of **natural selection**. An important part of this theory is known as **survival of the fittest**.

While on a voyage on the HMS Beagle, Darwin noted variation among the beaks of finches on the South American continent. He observed that depending on their location on the island, the shape of the beaks of the finches varied. This gave them an **advantage** regarding their food and the food available on that particular part of the island.

From this observation he developed a theory of **evolution** – he argued that within a population, there are **genetic mutations**. These genetic mutations, he argues, are advantageous, such as the ability to survive in a particular environment.

It should be noted that the general theory of the Big Bang is not the work of evolution, but a certain point in time – but this is a singular point in a steady state of the entire life of the universe.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



an animal to more easily access food. This enables the animal with the genetic mutation to **procreate**, passing on the mutation. Those who do not have the genetic mutation will die without passing on their genes. In this way, the mutation will become a **genetic make-up** of the whole species of animal.

The idea that those with the advantageous genes thrive and those without die is known as **natural selection**. It seems to be observable across many species, leading to the theory of evolution. This theory has gained much **empirical evidence** supporting it.

This is the **dominant** theory of how animals and mankind have come to be within the scientific community due to the large amount of **empirical evidence** supporting it. This is the **dominant** theory of how animals and mankind have come to be within the scientific theory which has become just opposed with creationist theories.

Professor Richard Dawkins is a well-known biologist and outspoken atheist. He believes in the process of natural selection, as he believes that this gives the best explanation for how mankind has come to be which does not require God to explain. In his own work *The Selfish Gene*, he adds further to the theory of evolution and the theories of the development of individual genes as well as collective ones.

He has also challenged various theories of God's existence which are rooted in ideas of naturalism (discussed later) in works such as *The Blind Watchmaker* in which he argues that if God is responsible for the creation of the world then such a God must be blind or cruel in view of the suffering experienced within the world.

Therefore, he believes strongly in, and indeed advocates for, the idea that science believes that in view of the developments of modern science which are made inside the world and how it came to be, there is no need for religion or belief in God and that it should no longer be something which individuals believe or take part in.

Those such as Dawkins believe that such a theory removes the need for God to exist and human beings. Some Christians have chosen to reject the theory of evolution and are known as creationists.

Creation Themes

Creation themes are religious ideas about the creation of the world. Each major religion has its own idea regarding how and why the world was created. For the sake of this course, the focus will be on the creation within Christianity, regarding the creation of the world, as told within the book of **Genesis**.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

One of the creation themes found within religious belief is the belief in **creationism**, which is the belief that God created the world. Those who have rejected scientific cosmologies about how the world came to be and have instead chosen to believe in the interpretation of the account of creation in **Genesis** as told in the **Bible**.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Generally speaking, they have a variety of beliefs, including the following:

- Scientists who posit evolution are basing their views on a few **assumptions**. As creationists do the same. As they are both basing their ideas on assumptions, they are both wrong.
- They argue that scientists posit the evolution of one organism to another, which is an assumption and has never been wholly proved.
- Some creationists argue that **fossils** are explained by the events in the Bible.
- Some view evolution as a theory as being so unlikely that it is difficult, they take a leap of faith in order to believe it.
- They believe that the Bible and the Quran are infallible (whose Word they believe is infallible). Therefore, they cannot make mistakes or be mistaken. In their belief, the Bible is the source of truth, not the Scripture, which is mistaken.

There are two main streams of creationist belief – **young Earth creationists** and **old Earth creationists**.

Young earth creationists are Christians who believe in a wholly literal interpretation of the Bible. They believe that the account of creation as told in Genesis is a literal, historical account. They are biblical **literalists**, believing that the world was created literally by God in **seven days**.

Science posits that Earth is approximately **13.8 billion years old**, as previously stated. However, young Earth creationists believe that Earth is **6,000 years old**. Their system of dating is based on processes of scientific testing. They believe that all humans can trace their lineage to Adam in the Garden of Eden, who then populated Earth. They believe that God created all the species observed now and that they were subsequently named by Adam.

Old earth creationists take a slightly less literal view of creation. They believe that the world is **old**. They hold that the six-day story of creation as described in Genesis is true. However, they interpret the original Hebrew word '**yom**' as 'day' – therefore, in this view, they believe that the six days of creation as told in Genesis represents a series of periods of creative energy, or periods of a literal creation week.

They also **reject evolution**. They believe God created every species with **intent**. They believe that species that have appeared which differ genetically to previous species have appeared through divine intervention. Interestingly, some do accept some forms of evolution, but this is limited. They believe that evolution occurred among **lower species**, but certainly not within the human species. They believe in **prehuman humanoids**, which are evidenced by archaeological excavation, but they believe that Adam was the first human which God imbued with a soul. They also believe in the flood of Noah as a historical event, but they believe that it was a localised event only occurring in one area.

However, it should be noted that there is not more scientific evidence or basis within young Earth creationism. There is no current scientific basis for new species appearing, and no way to empirically or substantially state that prehuman humanoids were with Adam. They also believe that the flood of Noah was a local event, while potentially appearing more reasonable in the text which old Earth creationists hold to interpret literally.

They lay emphasis on the fact that evolution is technically just a theory.

One of the issues with the theory of evolution is that it contradicts the biblical principle of Man being made in the **image of God** intentionally as described in **Genesis 1:27**.

Henry Morris is a good example of a creationist – heralded as one of the founders of the creationist movement within the twentieth century. He viewed the Bible as being the **infallible word of God** and argues that it is the yardstick against which all other beliefs should be measured.

He stated that his personal belief was that the Bible was infallible, the words and the events were wholly perfect – including the story of creation.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



He rejects the idea that dinosaurs existed before the time of human beings. He in coexisted. He argues that dinosaurs are the creatures referred to as 'behemoths'.

There are those who have attempted to use science in order to support biblical creation science.

Therefore, it is clear that the two ideas have clashed somewhat. Evolution is possible without God unnecessary. Evolution is by some Christians wholly rejected as not fitting with their faith. How then, do some believers accept evolution while still maintaining belief in God?



EXAM PREP

religious and scientific cosmologies can never agree.'

Create a spider diagram or table of reasons for and against this statement.

Teilhard de Chardin is one such theist. He was a palaeontologist and a Jesuit priest. His ideas were somewhat discombobulating at first within the context of the evolution and creation debate. His ideas have largely been **rejected** by the creationist community, but were popularised within the Catholic Church. He believed and argued that science and religion are compatible. He believed that evolution was as well as religious belief, and viewed science as being a part of the process of evolution for a religious purpose. In his view, the process of human evolution is leading towards a final stage, to evolve into an '**omega point**' – a being that is morally perfect, like Jesus.

Chardin is just one example of those who have accepted evolution but have maintained their faith. Another example of a theist who is also a scientist is **John Polkinghorne**, an Anglican priest and physicist. He argues that science and religion cannot dictate to one another what is truth and what is not. Both involve some form of a leap of faith in the unseen. For Polkinghorne; faith, he argues, is of religion.

There are even some who use science to argue against the theory of evolution. These are ideas such as **irreducible complexity** and **intelligent design**.

Irreducible Complexity and Intelligent Design

Anyone using the scientific method to look at the universe will observe the same thing. The universe is incredibly, **indescribably complex**. The mechanisms by which the universe governs itself are **complicated**, and there continues to be layers and layers of complexity discovered. It was one miniscule detail of difference then the world as it appears to currently be.

This is a religious theory which attempts to provide a scientific legitimacy.

This is a belief that it is **wrong** to **remove God** completely from theories about the universe. It is argued by proponents of these ideas that theories such as evolution and the Big Bang are incomplete. Questions individuals might have about these theories are proposed to be answered by the theory of intelligent design.

Biochemist **Michael Behe** published his ideas about **irreducible complexity** and **intelligent design** in his book **Darwin's Black Box**. In this book, he argued that modern developments in biochemistry have revealed **facts about life** which Darwin was not aware of at the time of his writing of evolution. These new developments have challenged Darwinian theory and, in fact, **point towards intelligent design**.



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



At the time of Darwin, he argues, we were not aware of anything smaller than a single cell. Of course, now, modern science has developed to the point that we know there are things smaller than cells, such as atoms. This is argued by Behe to bring the ideas of Darwin into question.

DISCUSS
Discuss with
you find in
intelligent d

He argues that if one observes the universe one can see evidence everywhere of irreducibly complexity. All the parts of the world appear to work in even one part of the world or one facet of how the world works it would not function as life.

The **analogy** used to compare his idea is that of a **mousetrap**. A mousetrap is made up of many different parts, big and small. However, if you were to remove much as a single part the mousetrap would cease to work as it was originally intended for purpose. It is irreducibly complex in that the removal of even one part will stop it from working.

The same, he argues, is true of the world. For example, the process of the **clotting** of blood is an incredibly small and relatively unnoticeable feature. However, it requires the different systems of biology. And if it was removed from the biology of human beings the functioning of the human body. It is necessary for a healthy human. In this way, the world is irreducibly complex.

The human eye is also used as an example of a part of the human body which supports life. It is incredibly complex; it should also be noted that the human eye itself was something that was not predicted by his theory as the incredible complexity of the human eye seems highly improbable given the simplicity of life in smaller beings.

The reason that Behe gives for this irreducible complexity is that, in his view, it has no other explanation than **intelligent design**. The ways in which the world and the human body work appear to be entirely too complicated to be the result of chance; therefore, he argues for the intelligent design of an intelligent God. This is a strong argumentative link to theism in Year 1.

There are a number of criticisms of this argument; for example:

- Many argue that it is **not a good use of science** and is not a wholly scientific argument.
- God cannot be **tested empirically**; therefore, all that can be proved is that life exists biologically.
- It employs **God of the gaps** theory, which is considered to be weak philosophy.
- It does not necessarily point towards the **traditional God** of Judaeo-Christianity.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Quick Quiz

1. What is the scientific method?
.....
.....
2. What is the meaning of non-overlapping magisteria?
.....
.....
3. How do C. S. Lewis and Richard Dawkins define miracles?
.....
.....
4. How did Hume critique miracles?
.....
.....
5. What is the main scientific cosmology?
.....
.....
6. What is meant by the phrase 'cosmological constant'?
.....
.....
7. What is evolution?
.....
.....
8. What is creationism?
.....
.....
9. How might a religious person accept evolution?
.....
.....
10. What is irreducible complexity?
.....
.....

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



QUICK QUIZ ANSWERS

4.1 Analogy and Symbol

1. An analogy is the use of comparison between two dissimilar or similar things to explain a separate concept.
2. A symbol is a physical representation of an idea which can point to a meaning or thing which it represents.
3. The via positiva, also known as the cataphatic way, posits that we can gain knowledge of God through the way in which the Scriptures describe him. For example, that God is good because we are told so and we understand the concept of goodness.
4. The via negativa, also known as negative theology or apophatic way, is the idea that we cannot use human language to effectively describe God. It is based on human understanding of these words. We cannot make positive assertions about God, only to make assertions about what God is not, and we can gain knowledge of God by negating what God is not.
5. Equivocal language is language which can have more than one meaning. For example, the word 'good' can mean different things.
6. By attribution, Aquinas meant that the made and the maker must have something in common. We can ascertain things about the maker by looking at the made. Therefore, we can understand things about God.
7. Any relevant example of a religious symbol will be accepted; for example, the cross.
8. Students here could give any of Tillich's beliefs about symbols, including that symbols participate in what they represent, as well as their life cycles.
9. Any relevant example will be accepted. The cross as a flag is an example of a symbol that is a companion.
10. John Hick questions the lack of verification on Tillich's part regarding symbols. He asks whether symbols participate in what they represent as well as questioning how a symbol can be a companion to what it represents.

4.2 Verification and Falsification Debates

1. Logical positivism is a school of thought popular in the 1930s in Western philosophy. It is a method of philosophically ascertaining what knowledge can be said to be true or false on whether or not it is empirical.
2. Analytic statements are statements which contain meaning and evidence that can be verified or falsified.
3. Strong verification is a truth which can be conclusively established empirically.
4. Weak verification is a truth which it is possible for experience to render probable.
5. Ayer believes that religion had no meaning.
6. Logical positivism contradicts itself in that should the theory be taken seriously, it cannot be said to be meaningful under its own criteria.
7. Anthony Flew.
8. The parable of the explorer/gardener.
9. He reaches the conclusion that this should force theists to either a. admit that there is a God that exists that points towards the disproving of God's existence or b. admit that evidence could alter their state of belief.
10. Hare challenges his ideas with his own analogy, presenting the idea of a gardener who is not a gardener.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



4.3 Language Games

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein.
2. Language games is the theory that religious and non-religious individuals are other as they are playing different games with different rules in the way they use language.
3. He argues that if one tries to play football by the rules of netball it will not work. Similarly, if you attempt to use non-religious rules to play a religious game, it will not work.
4. He believed that some groups of words have a family resemblance. The words in a family have different functions but in a similar fashion to an extent. Therefore, some words might function in a similar fashion to an extent but they have different functions in their own independent way.
5. This is his idea of building up knowledge from faith and reason alone, rather than from experience alone.
6. This is his idea of building up knowledge from experience alone rather than faith or reason alone.
7. This is his idea that in order for a statement to have some kind of meaning it must be something which is a fact. For example, if someone states that there is a tree outside the window and then there actually is a tree outside the window upon investigation, the claim is true.
8. Richard Brockhaus critiques picture theory as he argues that it does not work for all phrases.
9. Cognitive and non-cognitive.
10. That within the context of language games, God can simultaneously be understood in different ways within different views and realities.

5.1 Context to Critiques of Religious Belief

1. Students could give any of the strengths given in this course companion as a strength of moral teachings within Scripture compared to our innate sense of morality. For example, killing other human beings is wrong.
2. Students could give any of the weaknesses given in this course companion as a weakness. For example, the lack of coherence in some religious beliefs.
3. Naturalism is the belief that true knowledge can only be gained through empirical observation around us. It considers beliefs based on supernatural knowledge to be false or unverifiable.
4. Materialism is the belief that only physical matter exists. It interprets everything in terms of material substances; so, for example, mental processes are the result of physical processes in the brain. It denies the existence of non-material things such as God or supernatural beings.
5. Durkheim believes in a functional explanation of religion. It has a social function in society rather than being towards worshipping God.
6. Marx viewed religion as an oppressive social force – 'the opium of the people'.
7. Freud argued religion was an 'illusion' and existed because believers have unconscious fears and project their fears, anxieties and subconscious onto something greater to relieve them. It is a way to cope with feelings of helplessness, our inner conflicts and the fear of death.
8. The importance (and authority) of the use of human reason; tolerance of different beliefs; religious and non-religious are not; Anticlericalism.
9. Anticlericalism is the idea that no religion should have a monopoly on the power of being the receiver of truth.
10. David Hume.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



5.2 Bertrand Russell vs Frederick Copleston

1. Bertrand Russell identified as an agnostic with atheistic leanings.
2. Frederick Copleston was a Jesuit priest and, therefore, was a Christian.
3. Contingency, religious experience.
4. Gottfried Leibniz.
5. Copleston believed that the contingency argument was a good, logical proof of God.
6. Russell responded by arguing that the contingency argument makes the assumption of implication. He also takes issue with the definition and the fallacy of composition.
7. Copleston did not think that religious experience can give conclusive proof. He argued that if it is true and there is a true change observed in the individual, it should be believed to point to the existence of God.
8. Russell responded by drawing a comparison between the experience of an individual and the suicide of some individuals in Japan over well-worn emotional reaction is extreme and yet the source is fiction.
9. The idea of the change in the individual's moral code or personality was being a good indicator of the reality of the experience. Russell argued that it is not proof.
10. The strong reactions experienced by readership of Japanese fiction in which heroines is comparable to the strong reactions of people with religious experiences. The reaction is not true, yet the reaction is strong.

6.1 Life after Death

1. This belief posits that the soul and spirit are separate and not dependent on the body. It is immortal (living forever) and does not die in the same way in which the body does.
2. Rebirth is the notion that upon death, the nama rupa (name-form, material elements) is given a new body and is born again, possibly in the world of Forms.
3. This is the idea that souls and bodies are separate and upon the death of the body, the soul is given a new body, as the chain of life happens in continuous creation.
4. Replica theory is a thought experiment which gradually puts forward the idea of death. It posits an afterlife: as there is a death which occurs, the replica of the individual is created. The theory also goes on to posit that such replicas could be used to replace the original.
5. Resurrection is the returning to life of an individual who has died.
6. The world of change is the physical world in which individuals can undergo change. The world of Forms is spiritual, not physical, and cannot be physically changed.
7. This is a term for the continuity of the life of the soul, known as rebirth or the cycle of life.
8. The end of the cycle of rebirth is known as nirvana.
9. John Hick.
10. Impassibility, glory/brightness, power, etc.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



6.2 Points for Discussion about Life after Death

1. The dualist view holds that human beings as an entity are a combination of mind and body, where mind and body are separate facets of humanity.
2. The substance dualist view holds that human beings as an entity are made of two different substances, positing that mind and body are different substances.
3. The monist view holds that human beings as an entity are not made up of two different substances, but rather one.
4. The materialist view holds that human beings as an entity are made of matter only, regardless of whether or not one is discussing mind and body.
5. If an individual does not have a belief in the afterlife they might not feel the need to achieve entrance to something they don't believe in. One's beliefs about the afterlife does not have an impact.
6. A near-death experience is when an individual experiences death and then returns to life, either in this world or the afterlife.
7. The feeling of peace; The feeling of separation of the spirit from the body; The seeing of a light; Entering the light.
8. Students could give any examples of criticism. This could be the fact that near-death experiences are explained by a lack of oxygen in the brain at the point of death.
9. Students could give any strength for religious belief; for example, cumulative evidence.
10. William James argued that in some instances, beliefs which have a lack of evidence are still held. The essence of truth behind a claim is not necessarily reliant on the premises. The decisions and choices that we make on a daily basis that are made with little or no evidence.

6.3 Religion and Scientific Debates

1. The scientific method is a method of proving a statement by the cycle of hypothesis, prediction, testing and conclusion.
2. This is the idea that there is no overlap between science and religion – they are two different domains and, therefore, should be treated as different entities that are not in conflict.
3. Swinburne defined miracles as 'impossible' events that change how we understand the natural world.
4. Hume considered belief in miracles to be irrational because of the high improbability of miracles occurring. He developed four a posteriori (from experience) arguments for why there is inadequate evidence of miracles.
5. The Big Bang theory.
6. This is the value density of the energy in the universe.
7. A theory posited by Charles Darwin that species have experienced the process of natural selection as they have experienced mutations which have caused small changes that are genetically advantageous.
8. Creationism is the rejection of any scientific theories which contradict the belief that the account of creation as contained in the Bible with Genesis is what actually happened.
9. Some religious people accept evolution as a result of intelligent design, where the process made by God, and not a random process, does not conflict with their faith.
10. Irreducible complexity is an idea posited by Michael Behe, who argues that some complex systems that have happened as a result of chaos and, therefore, needs to be designed.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**

