

Prior synoptic links

Y9- Cosmological and teleological arguments.
The argument from first cause and the argument from design.
The domino analogy.

F) Challenges to the ontological argument:
Gaunilo, his reply to St Anselm; his rejection of the idea of the greatest possible being that can be thought of as having separate existence outside of our minds; his analogy of the idea of the greatest island as a ridicule of St Anselm's logic.
Immanuel Kant's objection – existence is not determining predicate: it cannot be a property that an object can either possess or lack.

A) Inductive arguments – cosmological:
Inductive proofs; the concept of 'a posteriori'.
Cosmological argument: St Thomas Aquinas' first Three Ways - (motion or change; cause and effect; contingency and necessity).
The Kalam cosmological argument with reference to William Lane Craig (rejection of actual infinities and concept of personal creator).

Scholars
St Thomas Aquinas

William Lane Craig

William Paley

F. R. Tennant

David Hume

St Anselm

Norman Malcolm

Rene Descartes

Gaunilo

Immanuel Kant

Theme 1: Arguments for the existence of God A-F

E) Deductive arguments - developments of the ontological argument
Rene Descartes – concepts of God as supremely perfect being; analogies of triangles and mountains/valleys
Norman Malcolm – God as unlimited being; God's existence as necessary rather than just possible.

B) Inductive arguments – teleological:
St Thomas Aquinas' Fifth Way - concept of governance; archer and arrow analogy.
William Paley's watchmaker - analogy of complex design.
F. R. Tennant's anthropic and aesthetic arguments - the universe specifically designed for intelligent human life.

C) Challenges to inductive arguments:
David Hume - empirical objections and critique of causes (cosmological).
David Hume - problems with analogies; rejection of traditional theistic claims: designer not necessarily God of classical theism; apprentice god; plurality of gods; absent god (teleological).
Alternative scientific explanations including Big Bang theory and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection.

D) Deductive arguments - origins of the ontological argument
Deductive proofs; the concept of '*a priori*'.
St Anselm - God as the greatest possible being (Proslogion 2).
St Anselm - God has necessary existence (Proslogion 3).

Issues for analysis

- Whether inductive arguments for God's existence are persuasive.
- Whether cosmological/teleological arguments for God's existence are persuasive in the 21st Century.
- The effectiveness of the ontological argument for God's existence.

Future synoptic links

Theme 2 – The problem of evil and the God of theism's existence.
Religion and Ethics chapter 3:
Deontological ethics: Aquinas natural law.
Theme 3 - Challenges to religious belief. Loving God compatible with evil?

Prior synoptic links

Theme 1: Arguments for existence of God:
Design argument suggests God's goodness.
Universe is 'just right for human life'
Theme 1 – Cause and effect
Inductive arguments

F) Religious responses to the challenge of New Atheism: rejection by religious groups of New Atheist claims regarding incompatibility of science and religion; increase in fundamentalist religious activity relating to morality and community; increase in religious apologists in media.
Religious responses to the challenge of New Atheism: rejection by religious groups of New Atheist claims regarding incompatibility of science and religion; increase in fundamentalist religious activity relating to morality and community; increase in religious apologists in media.

A) The problem of evil and suffering:

The types of evil: moral (caused by free will agents) and natural (caused by nature).
The logical problem of evil: classical (Epicurus) - the problem of suffering.
J. L. Mackie's modern development - the nature of the problem of evil (inconsistent triad).
William Rowe (intense human and animal suffering) and Gregory S. Paul (premature deaths).

Scholars

J. L. Mackie

Epicurus

William Rowe

Gregory S. Paul

Augustine

Irenaeus

Sigmund Freud

Charles Darwin

Carl Jung

Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief

A-F

E) Religious belief as a product of the human mind – Carl Jung: Religion necessary for personal growth with reference to: collective unconscious; individuation; archetypes; the God within. Supportive evidence including recognition of religion as a source of comfort and promotion of positive personal and social mind sets arising from religious belief. Challenges including lack of empirical evidence for Jungian concepts and reductionist views regarding religious belief arising from acceptance of Jung's ideas.

B) Religious responses to the problem of evil (i): Augustinian type theodicy
Evil as a consequence of sin: evil as a privation; the fall of human beings and creation; the Cross overcomes evil, soul-deciding. Challenges to Augustinian type theodicies: validity of accounts in Genesis, Chapters 2 and 3; scientific error - biological impossibility of human descent from a single pair (therefore invalidating the 'inheritance of Adam's sin'); moral contradictions of omnibenevolent God and existence of Hell; contradiction of perfect order becoming chaotic - geological and biological evidence suggests the contrary.

Issues for analysis

The extent to which the classical form of the problem of evil is a problem.
The degree to which modern problem of evil arguments are effective in proving God's nonexistence.

D) Religious belief as a product of the human mind: Sigmund Freud
Religion as an illusion and/ or neurosis with reference to collective neurosis; primal horde; Oedipus complex; wish fulfilment and reaction against helplessness. Supportive evidence including reference to redirection of guilt complexes and reference to instinctive desires deriving from evolutionary basis (Charles Darwin). Challenges including lack of anthropological evidence for primal horde; no firm psychological evidence for universal Oedipus complex; evidence basis too narrow.

C) Religious responses to the problem of evil (ii):

Irenaeian type theodicy:
Vale of the soul making: human beings created imperfect; epistemic distance; second-order goods.
Challenges: concept of universal salvation unjust; evil and suffering; immensity of suffering and unequal distribution of evil and suffering.

Future synoptic links

Link to chapter 7 religious language – Logical positivists...
Religion and Ethics chapter 8: Determinism and free will.
Challenges to religious belief: Jung revisited Descartes idea of knowledge from birth.
Religious experience – Jung = religious experience in psychological terms.
John Hick's view = 'everything will become clear'.

Prior synoptic links

GCSE: key terms
Transcendent. Near Death Experiences. Ethical thought
theme 1: Divine command theory.
Theme 2: Deductive – Anselm's definition of God is capable of doing anything
Sacred Texts – Tanakh.

F) A comparative study of two key scholars from within and outside the Christian tradition and their contrasting views on the possibility of miracles.
David Hume – his scepticism of miracles including challenges relating to testimony based belief; credibility of witnesses; susceptibility of belief; contradictory nature of faith claims.
Richard Swinburne – his defence of miracles, including definitions of natural laws and contradictions of Hume's arguments regarding contradictory nature of faith claims and credibility of witnesses

E) Miracles the definitions of:
St Thomas Aquinas (miracles different from the usual order), **David Hume** (transgression of a law of nature),
R.F. Holland (contingency miracle),
Richard Swinburne (religious significance).
Consideration of reasons why religious believers accept that miracles occur: evidence from sacred writings; affirmation of faith traditions; personal experience.

Issues for analysis

- The adequacy of James' four characteristics in defining mystical experience.
- The adequacy of Otto's definition of 'numinous'.
- How far different definitions of miracles can be considered as contradictory.
- The effectiveness of the challenges to belief in miracles.

D) The influence of religious experience on religious practice and faith:
Value for religious community including: affirmation of belief system; promotion of faith value system; strengthening cohesion of religious community.
Value for individual including faith restoring; strengthening faith in face of opposition; renewal of commitment to religious ideals and doctrines.

Theme 3: Religious Experience A-F

A) The nature of religious experience with particular reference to:
Visions – sensory; intellectual; dreams.
Conversion – individual/communal; sudden/gradual.
Mysticism – transcendent; ecstatic and unitive.
Prayer – types and stages of prayer according to Teresa of Avila.

B) Mystical experience:
William James' four characteristics of mystical experience: ineffable, noetic, transient and passive.
Rudolf Otto – the concept of the numinous; *mysterium tremendum*; the human predisposition for religious experience.

C) Challenges to the objectivity and authenticity of religious experience:
With reference to Caroline Franks Davis (description-related; subject-related and object-related challenges). Claims of religious experience rejected on grounds of misunderstanding; claims delusional - possibly related to substance misuse, fantastical claims contrary to everyday experiences.
Challenges: individual experiences valid even if non-verifiable; claims could be genuine – integrity of individual; one-off experiences can still be valid even if never repeated.

Scholars

Teresa of Avila

William James

Rudolf Otto

Caroline Franks Davis

St Thomas Aquinas

R. F. Holland

Richard Swinburne

David Hume

Future synoptic links

Genesis 37:5-10, Judges 7:13-15 and Matthew 2:13 Biblical dreams.
Theme 4 – religious language, how can people express ideas if they are impossible to put into words.
Otto = Non-rational aspects of religion raise issues of language.
Religious belief as a product of the human mind. Carl Gustav Jung.

Prior synoptic links

Theme 3 – Religious experiences, noetic.

F) Religious language as a language game:

Meaningful to people who participate in same language game (Ludwig Wittgenstein).

Supportive evidence – non-cognitive form of language provides meaning to participants within language game; consider use of language not meaning; language games fit with coherence theory of truth; religious language as expressions of belief.

Challenges, including rejection of any true propositions in religion that can be empirically verified; does not provide adequate meaning for the word 'God'.

E) Religious language as non-cognitive and mythical:

Complex form of mythical language that communicates values and insights into purpose of existence.

Supportive evidence – different forms of myths to convey meaning.

Challenges: problem of competing myths; meanings of myths change over time as they reflect the values of society as societal constructs; demythologisation of myths results in varying interpretations, myths often incompatible with scientific understanding of the world.

Issues for analysis

- The persuasiveness of arguments asserting either the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of religious language.
- How far Logical Positivism should be accepted as providing a valid criterion for meaning in the use of language.
- Whether the strengths of language games outweigh the weaknesses.

D) Religious language as non-cognitive and symbolic:

Functions of symbols (John Randall); God as that which concerns us ultimately (Paul Tillich).

Challenges including whether a symbol is adequate or gives the right insights. A consideration of how these two views (Randall/Tillich) can be used to help understand religious teachings

Theme 4: Religious Language A-F

A) Inherent problems of religious language:

Limitations of language for traditional conceptions of God such as infinite and timeless; challenge to sacred texts and religious pronouncements as unintelligible; challenge that religious language is not a common shared base and experience; the differences between cognitive and non-cognitive language.

B) Religious language as cognitive, but meaningless: Logical Positivism

Verification (A. J. Ayer) – religious ethical language as meaningless

Falsification - nothing can counter the belief (Antony Flew).

Criticisms of verification: the verification principle cannot itself be verified

Criticisms of falsification: Richard Hare, Basil Mitchell, Swinburne.

C) Religious language as non-cognitive and analogical:

Proportion and attribution (St Thomas Aquinas) and qualifier and disclosure (Ian Ramsey).

Challenges including how far analogies can give meaningful insights into religious language. A consideration of how these two views (Aquinas/Ramsey) can be used to help understand religious teachings.

Scholars

A.J. Ayer

Antony Flew

Richard Hare

Basil Mitchell

Richard Swinburne

Ian Ramsey

St Thomas Aquinas

John Randall

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Future synoptic links