

Religious Language (RL): Revision Notes

The key issue = if God is transcendent (i.e. above and beyond) and hard to understand, how can we talk of God in meaningful ways? This topic examined ways in how religious people use language to talk about God. It also looked at the challenges to religious believers and their ways of using language.

The uses and purposes of RL:

- Language = our way to explain concepts and to communicate.
- In philosophy of religion people try to explain concepts that can't be seen or heard i.e. God. So problem arises = if we can't see or hear him how can we talk about him?
- Also, if God is such a being then **how do we apply the words we use to God, do they have the same meaning or another??**
- Same Meaning: (i.e. **Univocal**) = the words we use mean exactly the same to God as when we use them for humans. Creates a problem = e.g. God = Faithful, but a dog can be called faithful too! So if words are Univocal then it has problem of bringing God down to a human level.
- Different Meaning: (i.e. **Equivocal**) = do words mean different things when applied to God? Problem is that when we use words like 'God is holy' it means something different from when I apply it to humans. So one can never know what a word means when applied to God. Another e.g. of Equivocal = 'a bat' could be 1) cricket bat or 2) flying rodent.
- If language is equivocal, it becomes 'evocative and functional, rather than cognitive and descriptive'. (i.e. it becomes meaningless! Or hard to get!)
- So RL about God is split into two parts 1) theists talking about God in a meaningful way despite him being transcendent and ineffable (indescribable), 2) others who think that if talking about God is equivocal then it's probably meaningless.
- The points above say that we speak about God **cognitively** (i.e. that our statement is either true or false and that it properly describes God). But others say that statements on God are **non-cognitive** (i.e. statements not based on true or false, this would include ethical, moral or emotive language - probably religious stuff too). Logical Positivists would therefore argue that there would be no point in studying non-cognitive statements because they are meaningless.
- Statements subject to true/false = 'the cat is sleeping on the chair' because you'd need to **verify** that. Statements NOT subject to true/false = 'ouch' or 'hurray' as it would be weird to ask why is someone saying 'ouch' when **you've just seen** them hurt themselves.
- So some say that religious talk is meaningless and non-cognitive and not to be discussed in philosophy, because it's not a matter of truth or falsehood (Wittgenstein).

The verification principles as developed by the Vienna Circle and A. J. Ayer:

The strong Verification principle (SVP) and the Vienna Circle:

- Verificationism = a philosophical movement which says that language is only meaningful if it can be verified by sense-observation or a tautology. Statements which can't be assessed = meaningless!

- **Tautology** = something which is true by definition.
- **Sense-observation** = gaining knowledge through your senses.
- Anything that is a Tautology doesn't need to be proved because it makes sense by definition, hence the verification principle wouldn't find tautologies a problem.
- This movement grew out of science and says you have to prove something through scientific experiment. They apply this way to language as well when someone makes a statement of fact.
- SVP: **Moritz, Schlick** and others said that if you cannot show with sense-observation how a statement is true, then the statement becomes meaningless. The aim of verificationists was to weed out those areas of science that are meaningless so they can avoid studying them.
- Another name for these verificationists = **Logical Positivists** and they originate from a group called **Vienna Circle**. To distinguish between meaningful and meaningless questions they created this verification principle.
- The verificationist idea were based on **David Hume**: said that unless a statement is **Analytical** (i.e. its internal logical provides it with meaning) or **Synthetic** (i.e. empirical evidence counts to show its truth), it is meaningless.
- According to logical positivists/verificationists saying 'my car is red' = meaningful because anyone could check it using senses. Whereas saying that the 'statue is beautiful' isn't confirmable in exactly the same way.
- So for a logical positivist language that talks about God is meaningless because one cant show him to be a truth or falsity through observation or experiments.
- Important point to note! Agnostics and Atheists are also being criticised for their use of language. They make claims just like the religious believers do, a positivist would just argue its better not to discuss religion at all.
- Summary of the views of the Vienna Circle/Logical Positivists =
 - ▶ Emerged in 1920's, influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea (i.e. statements are meaningful if it can be defined or pictured in the real world). Also followed Hume.
 - ▶ They derived a radical theory of language = the verification principle.
 - ▶ They said; only statements that were verifiable by observation could convey factual information.
 - ▶ Statements that one couldn't verify could only be 1) tautologies or 2) meaningless.
- Problems with Strong Verification:
 - ⇒ **Too rigid**, suggests cant make statements about history e.g. there are no verifiable facts about Julius Caesar.
 - ⇒ **Scientific laws = meaningless** - e.g. gravity must be meaningless because I'm not in all places at once to 'see' it at work!
 - ⇒ **Swinburne**: universal statements cant be verified e.g. 'all humans are mortal' seem meaningful but dismissed as nonsense by the verification principle

The Weak Verification Principle (WVP) and A.J Ayer:

- Ayer saw the above problems, so came up with a modified version of the VP.
- Still believed in the rejection of metaphysics as the Vienna Circle people wanted.
- He accepts the Analytic/A-priori and Synthetic/A-posteriori separation of Hume.
- But he didn't deny that people claim other statements like "God answers my prayers", it is just that such unverifiable statements do not have factual significance.
- **Ayer's difference from the rest of Vienna Circle = we don't have to prove something via a direct observation. We just have to show how it could be verified (hence its called weak verification principle).**
- E.g. 'Eric is a bachelor' is not conclusive at first, but Ayer says this doesn't make it meaningless, because if we went and found Eric we could check the truthfulness of this.
- **So remember verification is not about the truth or otherwise of a statement - it is about its provability.**
- He is different from the Vienna Circle as they say that things we directly verify by experience = true, but that's limiting. Ayer says that there are some things that can possibly be true, you just have to go out and look for its truth beyond doubt.
- This now allows us to make statements about history and make predictions in science so history and science = meaningful but religion and ethics = still meaningless.
- Problems with WVP:
 - ⇒ The VP itself is unverifiable. It is not a tautology and no evidence can show its truth!
 - ⇒ Some theologians and philosophers pointed out that sometimes statements cannot be verified at the present time, but can be one day. E.g. Life After Death can be verified after death in the future = **Eschatological Verification (John Hick)**.

The Falsification Principle (FP) of Anthony Flew:

- Aims to overcome the problems of the verification principle.
- Instead of demanding a statement to be verifiable the FP says that someone must be able to say what would count, in principle, in its falsification.
- Flew said - religious people tend to refuse the possibility that their statements can be falsified. As they'd believe, e.g., that God is good despite all the evidence against it, hence religious language would still be meaningless.
- So in order to for some claim to be classed as a scientific statement one must consider whether there is any evidence that may disprove their claim.
- "In order to say something which may be true, we must say something which may possibly be false" (John Hick 1966).
- Flew influenced by Karl Popper. **Popper argued that science was based on falsification not verification. Scientists pose hypotheses which they test. If the scientists know how to show that the hypothesis might be false (i.e. what evidence they would need to count against it) then their statement is synthetic = meaningful.**
- This is how science works, they leave the gap to falsify their evidence. A result of this = theories are superseded by better ones as more observations take place. E.g. Einstein

seen as improvement to Newton. This is what makes science different from other theories.

- Any theory that can't be disproved is not valid at all.
- Popper's views applied to R.L. by Flew = R.L. can't be falsified (as the religious believer is staunch in his position) hence not genuine. Flew uses the scenario of a Gardener from John Wisdom's parable of the Gardener:
 - ⇒ 2 people exploring jungle. They find a clearing that appears to have been cultivated. One believes that there is a gardener responsible for the clearing, the other disagrees.
 - ⇒ They test the believer's hypothesis that there is an invisible, intangible gardener.
 - ⇒ Every test fails to turn up any evidence to support the believer's claims.
 - ⇒ Despite lacking evidence, the believer persists, adjusting his hypothesis to suit the new lack of evidence.
 - ⇒ Each modification adds a 'qualification' to the original hypothesis, and the believer is able to persist in his claim.
 - ⇒ But Flew's analogy claims that religious believers shift the goalposts so much that the claims they make are so watered down that they are barely statements at all. Flew calls this the 'death of a thousand qualifications'.
 - ⇒ When confronted with something awkward regarding the existence of God, the religious person replies that God is mysterious.
 - ⇒ A statement can only be regarded as meaningful if something can be cited that will falsify the statement should it actually occur.
 - ⇒ This doesn't mean that the statement is factually incorrect (as the logical positivists would argue) - a statement is meaningful if the mechanism exists to show that it is factually incorrect.
 - ⇒ Flew argues that R.L. lacks this mechanism. It is not possible to falsify R.L. in the same way as it is with other language.
 - ⇒ E.g. of FP in action =
 - 'It is raining outside'. To deem this meaningful, we need to know what observation to make to falsify it.
 - We simply need to look out of the window in order to see whether the statement is factually correct.
 - Because this 'falsifying mechanism' exists, the statement is meaningful.
- Problems with FP =
- **Richard Swinburne** -
 - Religious statements are not cognitive, so shouldn't be treated as being falsifiable.
 - Statements can often be meaningful without there being the means to falsify them. E.g. the statement that 'a cupboard is full of toys that come to life when everyone is asleep and no-one is looking' is meaningful, because we understand what it means to suggest that toys can move, even though we can never gather the evidence required to falsify the statement.

- **R.B. Braithwaite** -
 - R.L. = non-cognitive. The VP and Flew treat R.L. as being cognitive.
 - A religious claim is essentially a moral statement expressed in the terms of symbolic language.
 - There is no need for the religious person to believe that the story is true - they would simply need to adopt a particular behaviour pattern.
- **Basil Mitchell** -
 - Often a person would accept a statement as meaningful simply on trust.
 - Although evidence might be against the beliefs, they continue to trust in God because the evidence is not sufficient to prove them false.
 - Rather than religious believers refusing to allow anything to count against their belief, Mitchell was arguing that the believer's prior faith maintains their trust in God even when the evidence appears to undermine that trust.
- **R.M. Hare** -
 - Agreed that religious statements are non-cognitive.
 - R.L. cannot make factual claims - but it can still influence the way that people view the world.
 - Hare called this way of looking at the world a '**Bilk**'.
 - He used the e.g. of a student convinced that his teachers were trying to kill him. Nothing that they did to try reassure him would shake his conviction that they were after him. The belief remained meaningful, even in the face of evidence to the contrary.
 - Religious beliefs are bilks - they affect the way people look at the world.
- **Possible Conclusion to the VP and FP:**
 - VP and FP present strong challenges to religious belief. However they are not the only ways to assess R.L.
 - For many religious believers the language used to talk about God is symbolic, mythological or different from everyday language.
 - Thus, religious people may say that VP and FP are not relevant challenges to R.L. as the nature of R.L. is different from those spoken about in the VP and FP.

The Via Negativa (V.N) 'the negative way' as a means of describing God

- ❖ V.N suggests that people can only talk about God in negative terms, or ways he is not rather than what he is. God is transcendent so you cannot say what God is.
- ❖ However you can clearly say what God is not: God is not a human being because God is transcendent, so God cannot have a body.
- ❖ Also, Christians believe God is Good, but they're not exactly sure how good he is, but they defiantly know he is not evil.
- ❖ Supporters of V.N say language when applied to God = equivocal. It's easy to say that God is merciful and Good but it harder to know what is actually meant by that when applied to God.
- ❖ When applied to humans it would mean something different.

- ❖ By making negative statements about God (God isn't evil etc) we gain limited knowledge of God.
- ❖ The idea came from Plotinus, who used this way to describe the Form of Good.
- ❖ Pseudo-Dionysius, a 5th century Christian, used same method: God = 'beyond assertion' (beyond description). Making positive statements about God = anthropomorphism of God. e.g. to say that God is Good limits his goodness because it puts a human idea of goodness into our minds.
- ❖ Moses Maimonides, Jewish philosopher: making positive statements about God brings him down to human level. Only positive statement to be made is that he exists! Describe God through the negative.

Evaluation of V.N. - Strengths:

- ✓ Since its impossible for humans to talk positively about God, then to speak about him in terms of what he is not avoids some pitfalls. Peter Cole: "by denying all descriptions of God, you get insight into God rather than unbelief..."
- ✓ Prevents humanising (anthropomorphic) of God. we are still not left with an inadequate idea of God formed using limited language.
- ✓ Seen as more respectful of God, instead of unbelieving you are actually showing more faith and respect! Maimonides said positive statements are improper as don't fully convey God.
- ✓ Supports many views that God is beyond description and that experience of him is ineffable that limit God from being made.
- ✓ Only the V.N. really conveys the transcendence of God - that he is too high to even try make positive statements about!

Evaluation of V.N. - Weaknesses:

- V.N. not true reflection of how religious people speak of God. they don't speak in negative, but seek to look for positive knowledge of God.
- V.N. says no positive statements can be made. But if we're saying the negative we are implying the positive too.
- The result is only a very limited knowledge of God.

The use of analogy, symbol and myth to describe God

Analogy:

- Something that we use in everyday talk. An analogy is describing unfamiliar things to us using things we are familiar with.
- It is also language used to inspire a sense of the meaning intended, rather than being used with a literal intention.
- Religiously, analogies are the only option available given the difficulties of making univocal and equivocal statements about God.
- "It seems that no word can be used literally of God." (Aquinas, Summa Theologica)

- Aquinas: 1) R.L. is meaningful, 2) rejected the approach of the Via Negativa, because it did not say enough about what God is.
- He argued that we can never speak about God without using everyday language, because that's all we have.
- We are imperfect beings using imperfect language to describe a perfect God, but that's all we have, so we have to do that.
- As well as the Equivocal and Univocal language, Aquinas believed there was also Analogical language. E.g. Emily is good, God is good. The use of language in one context is understood - it points to the meaning in the other context.
- Aquinas argued that univocal lang not applied to God because it limits him, and he isn't limited.
- Argued against equivocal lang as its not good because it communicates nothing about God.
- Aquinas distinguished between two different types of analogical language:
 - 1) **Analogy of Attribution:** we ascribe a quality to one thing because it is caused by another e.g. human wisdom is a reflection of divine wisdom.
 - 2) **Analogy of Proportion:** we ascribe a quality to one thing because it points towards another thing which has that quality e.g. human love points beyond itself to divine love.
- Assessment of Analogy:
 - ⇒ Seems to show that R.L. is not absurd and can actually give some understanding of God, it avoids anthropomorphism of God.
 - ⇒ Scotus argues that analogy is too vague and leaves us unable to understand God and his actions.
 - ⇒ Hick: the incarnation is the thing that allows us to make some statements about God, because Christ was on earth, who Christians say was God on earth.
 - ⇒ However, if God is supposed to be different from humans it is difficult to see how words can be used in a way to compare him.
 - ⇒ Does analogy tell us anything? - we cannot fully know what a word means for God. E.g. if we cannot know what God being Just means this suggests that 'God being just' is actually meaningless.
 - ⇒ Aquinas rejects the literal usage of words. But Swinburne says that some words are univocally used for God. For example God is Good isn't meant as how humans are but its meant as God is Good but to a greater degree.

Symbol:

- A Sign simply points us towards something else whereas a Symbol participates on that to which it points and it communicates something more powerful.
- E.g. of a Sign = a person who wants to attract someone else's attention might wave a cloth.
- E.g. of a Symbol = waving a cloth becomes more significant when it happens to be a national flag.

- In many religious traditions symbols are used to explain many beliefs about God to people. E.g. Christians wear the crucifix as an important symbol.
- These symbols show a connection and submission to God. In Islam the Salah (prayer) shows a symbolic pattern of actions while praying.
- Paul Tillich:
 - ✓ R.L. should be understood in the same way we see signs and symbols. R.L. communicates through Symbols.
 - ✓ By that he means that religious symbols communicate the most significant beliefs of human beings.
 - ✓ We are able to learn some things about God but the language is symbolic not literal. The symbolic language used is understandable to humans but it points to a high reality.
 - ✓ He suggests that even things like saying 'God is Good' is symbolic.
 - ✓ Some religious symbols are important to believers and it means a lot more than what is shown. But for others symbols can be seen as a work of art or something nice, but has no deeper meaning. E.g. the candle at the tabernacle in Catholicism = presence of God, for non-catholics its just a light.
 - ✓ Tillich argues God = "ground of being" - i.e. he is the reason for all existence and meaning of everything. The ground of being cannot be known through a personal way but through symbols.
 - ✓ Symbols include atonement, sacrifice, eternal life and Jesus' life all = reveal the ground of being (God).

Criticisms of Tillich:

- If religious statements are not literal then its hard to see what meaningful content they may have.
- His arguments are vague; what does it really mean for a 'symbol to participate in something or show a higher reality'?
- Paul Edwards: symbols don't convey any facts, Tillich said that they are supposed to, and therefore they cannot be verified or falsified using empirical evidence.

Myth:

- Some say that religious ideas conveyed through myths can give cognitive knowledge of God.
- Some people equate myths to legends and ancient stories that are false.
- But actually myths are stories that convey the values of a people that tell them.
- They communicate truths of a society, religious myths may provide a meaningful way to make statements about God. E.g. the Genesis creation stories = these teach believers God is the loving creator.
- Bultmann: said that myths are the use of imagery to express the other worldly. What is present in a myth is not literal truth but a deeper truth.
- Bultmann tried to demythologise the bible with the aim of revealing its truths.

- Eventually this was given up, because the truths expressed in the stories didn't make much sense without the stories.
- If you understand myths as fictional stories then they wouldn't tell us anything about God. However if they are the opposite, then like symbols, they will open up an deeper understanding of the ultimate reality.

The thinking of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).

- In 'Tractatus' he argued that the purpose of language = to enable us to represent the world.
- Language = a tool to picture the world -> each word is like a picture.
- Meaning in language is based on the objects that words refer to.
- Furthermore, everything is a matter of perspective, he says "The World is everything that is the case" (Tractatus).
- He also recognised limitations to the literal approach to language. The Logical Positivists' view was also limiting.
- The task of a philosopher = to analyse use of language, the meaning of a word is really its use. Through the use we create a view of the world.
- The meaning of a word comes from the circumstance in which it was uttered and the other words along with those. Words perform a function, they don't signify just an object.
- E.g. = game of chess - rules state how pieces can move. However to talk about how the queen or pawn moves only makes sense within the context of chess. Language 'game' = like Chess.
- If one doesn't follow the rules of language (grammar, syntax) then you'll be talking nonsense.
- The question; 'what is a word really?' = 'what is a chess piece?' our words are moves that we make playing various 'games'.
- To say that a king can move one square in any direction is an instruction that only makes sense in chess. Likewise, to say that Revision is Boring makes sense in the English Language but the same words wouldn't make sense in the language game of Spanish.
- Religious e.g. = "God allows suffering to develop our character and we'll be rewarded with heaven" would be approved by a Christian interpretation of the world. But not necessarily with an atheistic one.
- If the theory of Language Games is applied to R.L. = a different view from verificationism. Religion can't be analysed through the narrow verification way and neither can religion be analysed in a scientific way because it's a different sort of thing.
- But religions give a deep interpretation to human life, especially to the religious.
- What made Wittgenstein different from the Logical Positivists = 1) religious language is a language game and as such the language of religious belief is meaningful to people who are part of that religion.
- Implications = to understand the R.L. of a person, you need to be part of their religion, otherwise you won't have a clue.

- The problem that verification has is that it applies its own language game to in an inappropriate context; i.e. R.L. thus verificationism is a bad way to understand religion.
- Strength =
 - ⇒ Wittgenstein's theory gives believers a way to express the meaningfulness of R.L. while at the same time being able to explain why it doesn't make any impact or sense to an atheist.
 - ⇒ Can be said that Wittgenstein captures what it means to be religious. As religion is an activity, involving a way of life and language etc. For many believers their religion isn't just a philosophical idea but a complete way of living; a culture.
- Criticism =
 - ❖ Some philosophers have argued that language games become 'exclusive clubs', but language is supposed to be open to everyone.
 - ❖ Moreover, religions even claim the universal application of their language - e.g. belief in God is not subject to particular groups, but said to be for everyone.
 - ❖ In elaboration of the above point; Language games (when applied to religious language) have the danger of making religious belief anti-empirical. Some believers would claim that some statements they make are actually universal and empirically true statements.

Religious Experience: Revision Notes

What is a Religious Experience (RE)? [Any question on RE needs to mention the following as a brief introduction]

- ⇒ **Definition:** a direct experience and encounter with the divine
- ⇒ **Subjective and objective:** subjective = an inner experience, can only be explained by you, no one else can see or feel it. Objective = empirical facts that are generally observable by everyone. **Religious Experience can potentially be both of these, but tends to be Subjective and unexplainable. Ordinary experiences are mostly objective facts.**
- ⇒ **Types of Religious Experience;**
 - 1) **Mystical** [James' arguments]
 - 2) **Conversion** [Paul]
 - 3) **Corporate experiences** [Toronto Blessing]
 - 4) **Numinous experiences** [Otto]
 - 5) **Visions and voices** [St Teresa - prayer and inner visions].
- ⇒ **Swinburne's classification of Religious Experiences:**
 - **5 types**, separated into Public and Private experiences:
 - **Public experiences (exps)** [*Corporate and some Conversion exps may fit here*]:
 1. *Ordinary exps* - natural events interpreted as religious = the beauty of nature
 2. *Extraordinary exps* - appears to break laws of nature = Jesus turning water to wine.
 - **Private experiences** [*Mystical, Numinous exps and Visions/Voices may fit here*];

3. *Describable in ordinary language* - like dreams.
4. *Non-describable exps* - referring to direct exps with God, beyond human power
5. *Non-specific exps* - such as looking at the world from a religious view.

Explain the aims and conclusions of William James on Religious Experience:

- ⇒ **William James' view on the importance of religious experiences**
- James aims to survey RE's as a psychologist and to present his findings and its implications on philosophy.
 - Different from Freud - Freud dismisses religion by means of psychological theory. James accepts psychological dimension to RE's but doesn't feel it rules out a psychological cause
 - James' definition of religion:

"...experiences of individual men in their solitude...so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they...consider the divine"

(Varieties: Lecture 2)
 - One finds that this definition doesn't talk about organised religion. Here you see that James thinks RE's are more important than religious teachings and practices. **They are 'second hand' to RE's, they are the true religion**
 - James' book - 'Varieties of Religious Experiences' looks at first-hand accounts of RE's. Some critics see some of these as psychological disorder, but James placed these accounts as central to any understanding of religion.
- ⇒ **James' 4 qualities of a Mystical Experience - refers to experiences where God is reveal directly and there is a sense of oneness with Him.** James saw the following 4 characteristics as common to all mystical experiences:
- 1) Noetic Quality - the fact that certain knowledge is gained through revelation, not senses.
 - 2) Ineffability - experience can't be described in human terms.
 - 3) Transiency - the experience is out of proportion in terms of time and space
 - 4) Passivity - the experience is out of the individual's control
- ⇒ **James' Conclusion - RE's have supernatural, psychological and physical elements. His conclusions rest on these principles:**
- 1) **Empiricism [knowledge gained through observation]:**
 - James is committed to empiricism and provides such evidence of the effects of RE's.
 - These evidences give us clues about what we can't see and hear. RE's opens certain men up to a wider consciousness that ordinary people can't see (Varieties)
 - In response to those sceptics James says that we all interpret our experience, be they normal or extraordinary.
 - 2) **Pluralism [idea that truth found in many faiths]:**
 - ❖ People of different religions experience the similar reality to each other.

- ❖ But the reason why it then becomes different is because they interpret it in their 'second-hand' religious belief structure.
- ❖ E.g. Christian sees exp as Holy Spirit, Hindu sees exp as Vishnu etc.

3) Pragmatism [idea that truth isn't fixed but is whatever has value to us];

- This is the key point in James' work. James believed truth isn't fixed but what is true is whatever seems to work for us.
- Therefore, by seeing effects of RE's we have to conclude that there is truth in religion.

How does a Religious Experience prove God? Explain and Assess James and Co

- **Religious Experience proves God through a direct experience of him it can be summarised into 4 statements:**

- i) *Religious experience is a experience of a divine entity*
- ii) *Many have said to experience the divine*
- iii) *And there are many people who have testified to this*
- iv) *Therefore God must exist.*

This argument seems great at first, but it clearly shows that there's a possibility that RE's may be caused by God, but then they not. It's like saying; "If I drink too much wine I will fall over: I have fallen over therefore I drank too much wine"

Just as there may be other explanations for falling over, there may be other possible explanations for RE's.

- **James' Argument from religious exp as a proof for God:**

- ⇒ James' psychological approach shows God.
- ⇒ All religious experiences show the probability of God.
- ⇒ But because he is pluralistic, he doesn't speak of a specific God, but speaks of a 'higher being'.
- ⇒ The effects RE's had on people showed there is a God. The validity of a RE is based on what it does to the person.
- ⇒ His concern was more 'does it work for the person?' than 'is it true?'
- ⇒ Truth is what we make to be valuable to ourselves because of this religion has some truth.

Counters to James [can act as a brief analysis of his argument]:

- Not real objective truths, but are subjective, doesn't this make truth relative? So it's not proper truth!
- Lack of evidence [see challenge 5].

- **Swinburne's Argument; two Principles:**

- 1) **Principle of Credulity;** what one sees is probably right.

Criticism: can be mistaken in what is seen, senses may cause you to misinterpret things.

Counter: not mistaken all the time. If we constantly rejected things we'd end up doubting everyday ordinary experiences which is absurd. [Use analogy of explorers in a jungle to back this up - see 'Criticisms of Swinburne' handout]

- 2) **Principle of Testimony;** if there isn't evidence stating the opposite then one should believe the testimony of religious experience.

Criticism: If one accepts the possibility of an experience not being from God then how can one be sure that a religious experience proves God? A proof for God should be flawless.

Counter: however, most religious experiences are reliable, as the evidence to the contrary isn't there. Plus they happen randomly e.g. Paul.

[It would be a good bonus to know the rest of these people]

- **Brian Davies:** because it is a direct experience of God, one can say there is a God. Just as I can reasonably say there is a bed in my room because I have encountered it, so I can reasonably say that there is a God because I have directly encountered him.
- **A.E. Taylor and problems with Religious Experience:**
 - Religious experiences are open to abuse; may be used by fanatics and misinterpreted.
 - A lot of Religious Experiences are illusions e.g. some Sufi groups in Morocco have Cannabis to attain Spiritual Ecstasy.
 - Religious Experiences are not the only way to God, but is one way.
 - However, the religious man is the one who is able to experience the 'Holy' because he/she is the one who sees true reality and a Religious experience is otherworldly. So, the religious man is the best person to have a religious experience.
- **Ockham's razor:** simplest explanation is the most likely and that if no other explanation is more obvious we should accept that it is an experience of the divine.

Challenges to RE's as an Argument for the Existence of God

[* = important challenges to know - the rest would be excellent bonuses]

Explain and Assess the above ideas

1. *Physiological Challenge:

- One argument against religious experiences suggests that they have a physiological cause.
- i.e. they are the product of physical changes in the body. E.g. did Paul have epilepsy?
- This could explain his experience of bright light.
- It is known that damage to the brain can cause hallucinations, as can brain tumours.

Counter arguments -

- The weakness of this challenge is that there is no evidence that every person who has had a religious experience was suffering from an illness that can cause side effects such as hallucinations its victims.

- The physiological changes could actually be a result of the experience. E.g. when one becomes scared the body releases chemicals such as adrenaline

2. *Psychological Challenge:

- Many have argued that religious experiences are a product of human psychology.
- If this is true this would explain the common occurrence of religious experiences both throughout history and across cultures.
- Freud;
 - ✓ Links religion with a neurosis caused by childhood insecurities and the desire for a father figure to protect us, like God.
 - ✓ Religious experiences are hallucinations that have a simple psychological explanation.
 - ✓ He argued that religion was an illusion by which he meant that it expresses people's desires - what they want to believe.
 - ✓ Religion meets people's psychological needs, if this is true then religion must come from these psychological needs
 - ✓ This makes religious experiences similar to wishful thinking
- Ludwig Feuerbach;
 - ✓ God is a human projection.
 - ✓ We created God in our own image.
 - ✓ Human beings made up God's attributes.

Counter arguments -

- Jung: accepted religious experiences, which are important for our spiritual development. This development is essential to our psychological wholeness. We all have an idea of God within us.
- William James: religious experiences could relate to the human subconscious, he did not believe this challenge was an argument against God's existence.
- If God is so powerful, couldn't he use psychology to give people religious experiences?

3. *Conflicting Claims Challenge:

- Different religions claim to see the deities of their religions,
- e.g. a Hindu may see Vishnu, whereas a Christian may see Jesus and a Muslim see the Prophet.
- Creates issues = which one of these would be correct?
- Hume: Conflicting claims in different religious traditions cancel each other out.
- Religious experiences are considered to be authoritative for the religious tradition as a whole

Counter argument:

- However, Christianity has suggested for centuries that the authority of religious experiences is for the experiencer only.

4. *Illogical Challenge:

- Kant: even if there is a realm beyond our own, it is impossible for us to experience it.
- We are human and finite (limited) beings. So it is impossible for an unlimited infinite being (i.e. God) to be understood by us.

Counter arguments:

- God can reveal himself if he chooses
- W. Alston; there may be a part of our mind that is able to experience God

5. Lack of Evidence Challenge:

- There is a lack of evidence that these experiences have happened beyond what a person says.
- Religious experiences may lead to changes in a person, but that's all it shows, this doesn't give us an insight into the nature or origins of religious experiences

Counter arguments:

- If you accept that Religious Experiences changes a person, then doesn't this show the truth and power of such experiences? Couldn't it be argued then that they do give an insight?

6. *Sociological Challenge:

- ⇒ Origins of religious exps found in society. A religious exp reflects the place you grown up in.
- ⇒ Hence, it is no surprise that Catholics see Mary and Hindus see Shiva etc - the visions reflect the thought of the society in which one lives.
- ⇒ Marx: religion is like a alienation from the true self i.e. that religion was a fake that distracts people from reality. That's why he called religion the 'opium of the people'.
- ⇒ So religious experiences create alienation.

Counter arguments:

- Religion = more than comfort drug. Rather their faith is a relationship with God, and God is a real being and not a product of society.
- Religion isn't just a fake and a mode of controlling people, sometimes its seen as a force for change e.g. Martin Luther King Jr.
- When Marxism implemented has caused more problems than solutions in countries such as Russia and China.

Other challenges:

- Vardy; UFO criticism of Swinburne – that would need to verify the experience, can't accept your own view from face value, you wouldn't immediately say you have seen a UFO you'd go to a radar station for confirmation. Hence Swinburne would be wrong to say one should just accept the testimony

- *most Religious Experiences are subjective, so although it is A-Posteriori in the sense you've seen it, others can't verify it*
- *Problem with A-posteriori; inductive knowledge (A posteriori) is not certain, but is based on information that may change hence can the experience be reliable?*

Strengths

- 1) *It is A-posteriori, as people directly experience God, e.g. Paul conversion on the road to Damascus.*
- 2) *Religious Experience's can be experienced in groups, this adds an objective credibility to the argument, i.e. everyone can view it and if a group experiences a religious experience then they can't all be lying.*
- 3) *Backed up by many testimonies - e.g. Near-Death Experience accounts*
- 4) *There is a criticism on the grounds that religious experiences are results of a person's psychological state, but one could argue that God works through psychology, e.g. God placed the words of the Quran in the heart/mind of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) = extinguishes the psychological challenge by incorporating use of psychology into the religion.*

Evaluation

Are the strengths or weaknesses more convincing? Does the argument show God's existence?
(The following arguments can form part of your own **evaluation**, this fulfils the AO2 criteria)

⇒ **Arguing for religious experience;**

- *Existence of God is a simpler explanation for many things proposed by science or rationality. For instance, science talks about psychological/neurological problems in the brain, this is more complicated than saying God caused it. According to Ockham the simplest explanation is the most likely (this is called Ockham's Razor)*
- *If a religious experience affects the lives of those experiencing them then they can't be utterly meaningless.*
- *It is logical to say that some experiences are wrong other times they are right. So it would be logical to say, some experiences of God may be wrong and others may be right.*
- *Sometimes experiences have to be accepted without question, just like basic beliefs. Otherwise you will go to ridiculous levels of scepticism (denial of everything)*
- *What are the grounds for saying that the testimony of a religious believer is any less reliable than that of a scientific or non-believer? We shouldn't be surprised that religious people have these experiences, because they know what to look for and are closer to God.*
- *Therefore, the only way to defeat claims is to show overwhelming evidence that there is no God. When that evidence isn't there religious experience provides evidence that there is a God (Swinburne)*

⇒ **Arguing against religious experience:**

- Experiences may be open to non-religious interpretation. God is an impossible meaningless notion who cannot be experienced, and even when people say they experience him they can't describe it.
- Everyday experiences are deceptive, so the divine may be even more so, plus no one can verify the testimonies.
- Testimonies of religious believers are questionable as their evidence may be biased towards their religion.
- Could be a manifestation of psychological needs, an illusion created by people so they can cope.
- Religious experiences can be explained by neurological factors e.g. epilepsy; people in past thought that it was demonic possession, but later found that it was a medical condition.
- Therefore, because the accounts appear unreliable, we can't use Religious Experiences as an argument for the existence of God.

You could get a question on either one of the following it is up to you to do more background reading on them, I've given you as much as I could.

Explain Numinous experiences and Assess - Rudolf Otto and co;

Feeling the experience of the divine, 'numin' = Latin word for divine.

Definition: It can be described in many ways. It is hard to define the term as individual experiences of Numinosity are not always the same. Kimberly Rodgers best defined Numinosity as:

"The emotional glow...an object instils, which is different from what we experience in ordinary life...: an awe-filled encounter [with the divine]"

This definition is derived from the word "Numinous" which can be described as being in the presence of an awesome power. Contributions given to the understanding of Numinosity are following;

Otto (this guy you need to know properly!)

- Claims that almost everyone has experienced the divine, or a feeling of the divine present in the universe.
- Numinosity is irrational, and is beyond what one is able to experience through the senses.
- Elements of numinous experience can be identified as the 'wholly other', 'awfulness', 'overpoweringness' and the 'fascinating'. (**mysterium tremendum et facinans**)
- Suggested that religion must derive from a being that is totally separate from this world.
- This being is totally unknowable and awesome and terrifying yet fascinating. (**mysterium tremendum et facinans**)
- **Msyterium:** because experience cannot be explained.
- **Tremendum:** because of the awe and terror in God's presence.
- **Facinans:** because we have a strange fascination towards it.

- In the presence of such a being that numinosity is felt. This numinosity = the key to understanding religions. *He says:*
"There is no religion in which it does not live as the innermost core and without it no religion would be worthy of the name"

Basically, no religion would be where it is without the experiences.

- These are at the heart of religions, believers interpret these experiences and create beliefs around them. Ideas about God are formed when people reflect on these experiences, but ideally God is indescribable.
- Influenced by Kant, Otto said God not known through senses or logic, rather God is 'wholly other'.
- We can't know God unless he shows himself.
- Numinous experience is where God reveals himself.

Criticism and Assessment: This idea of God being separate from mankind is extremely problematic. For instance, it is an apparent contradiction of the Christian belief that God is a personal being. This 'otherness' makes God seem impersonal.

Buber (it would be good to know the rest of these guys and you can tweak their opinions to become an assessment of Otto)

- Stressed the existence of personal relationships that can exist regardless of the concept of the numinous. He suggested that relationships can be formed at two levels:
- I- It: viewing people and things simply as phenomena (i.e. simply classifying things)
- I - Thou: taking a relationship further by 'probing deeper'. This makes a truly personal relationship.
- Buber stated God is the 'Eternal Thou' and as a result God can reveal himself to man on a personal level which leads to a special 'Religious Experience'
- "In each Thou, we address the Eternal Thou."
- So this means; individuals can encounter God in the revelation of everyday existence. The bible is a dialogue between man and God and seen as an experience of Numinosity.

Kierkegaard

- Sees faith as a miracle, the only way God is known to an individual was through a 'leap of faith'.
- Knowledge of God depends on; 1) personal level of faith, 2) religion one follows and 3) type of faith.
- The relationship between man and God is like two different worlds.
- Interestingly remarks; cannot prove God exists, but only through fear and trembling you make the decision to believe (leap of faith).

Schleiermacher

- Agreed with Otto that religious experiences are emotional, these emotions go deeper than reason.

- The experiences aren't numinous but a feeling of dependence on the divine.
- This dependence = at the heart of religion. Theology or secondary religion arises when people reflect on these experiences.

Explain Visions and Voices and Assess; St Teresa of Avila; 3 types of prayer:

- ⇒ Usually these visions/voices not experienced by others.
- ⇒ Can be experienced while awake or in dream, St Teresa saw Christ at her side.
- ⇒ Different types of **Visions** from different faiths;
 - Muhammad's (pbuh) vision - 'Night of Power', Quran was revealed, he had a vision of Angel Gabriel.
 - St Teresa's vision - **inner visions** = being conscious of a higher power with you, such visions not seen with the real eye but with the mind's eye [intellectual vision]
 - Some people say that these types of visions are probably confused with imagination.
 - Bernadette's vision at Lourdes - vision of Mary, told to dig the ground at the feet of Mary where she found a spring of water, some people report to be cured by the water.
 - This is an example of a vision relaying information [Mary telling Bernadette things] = a **Corporeal vision** because Bernadette sees Mary like a physical person.
 - **Imaginative visions** = visions happening through dreams. Message of God revealed through dreams.
- ⇒ St Teresa's 3 types of Prayer is a method of communication between man and God - visions happen in them.
 - 1) Prayer of the quiet; brought by meditation, the state is maintained for a few seconds, the one experiencing can still control their bodies
 - 2) Prayer of union; more intense, less distractions occur, the power of movement and senses are still not lost.
 - 3) Ecstasy [spiritual marriage]; can be accompanied by features like erratic dancing, speaking in tongues. In this state visions and revelations occur. It is the ultimate state of contemplating the divine.
- **Voices:** RE's are associated with hearing things, more than a voice, but is a communication of knowledge.
- God communicates messages too, e.g. calling of Samuel, God's voice calls him to be a prophet.
- 3 features of voices;
 - 1) Disembodied voice - doesn't come from a person speaking.
 - 2) Voice communicates a revelation.
 - 3) Authoritative, passing God's authority.
- Augustine's experience; he heard a voice of a child playing, but he interprets this to be God communicating to him. This shows that religious experiences not always supernatural could be natural things given a religious significance.

Criticisms and Assessment: are visions/voices really from God?

- But how do you know the experience is from God? There are loads of mentally ill people who kill people because they claim to have heard God's voice telling them to do it.
- In order to overcome this, St Teresa offered two tests to see if genuine; 1) does it fit with Christian teaching and 2) does the person feel at peace after the experience?
- If these effects not present then experience from Satan not God.
- But just because the voice fits with Church teaching, it still doesn't prove that the voice has to be from God, it still could be from their mind.
- Sometimes visions/voices are linked to factors like extreme fasting. Maybe the weakened body leads a person to seem like they are having an experience?

Explain Conversion [2 types] and Assess;

- ❖ Conversion is a process that leads to the adoption of a religious way of life.
- ❖ Although the inner experience is not empirically testable, the changes are something that can be empirically observed [see p40 of textbook for some experiences].
- ❖ This process occurs when religion becomes the central focus of a person's mind. There are two types;
 - 1) Volitional - voluntary experience
 - 2) Self-surrender - involuntary.
- ❖ Conversions are seen as miracles by those who experience it because of its strong and permanent effects.
- ❖ Conversion regenerates the person and they gain a greater understanding of their faith.
- ❖ James saw conversion experiences as a transformation from a divided imperfect self to a more unified consciousness.
- ❖ If someone changed over a period of 20yrs then it wouldn't be so special, but the fact that it happens so quickly and some changes are permanent gives a powerful piece of evidence for the existence of God.
- ❖ James; the truth of the experience is in its results.
- ❖ Most famous example of conversion = St Paul's road to Damascus. Was a Christian bounty hunter and on the road he had an experience of Jesus that caused him to convert to Christianity and become one of its key figures.

Psychological views on conversion (criticisms and assessment)

- Some see conversions in a different way: Generally, transformations in terms of our priorities and ideas do occur for all of us as we go through life.
- Changes are normally slowly, but sometimes we have 'crisis' times which cause quick transformations. So conversions could be seen in the same way.
- Edwin Starbuck; most Religious conversion happen to people between 15-24, however interestingly non-religious people this age go through depression etc and then find an identity after. This caused Starbuck to make parallels between conversion experiences and psychological experiences.
- Some disagree with Starbuck. Some recognise the psychological aspect of conversion, but others say that to say conversions are wholly psychological fails to address the causes of the experience.

Explain Corporate Experiences and assess:

- ▶ Corporate exps are groups exps that happen at the same time.
- ▶ E.g. Toronto Blessing in 1994, where a large amount of people claimed to have experienced the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ These experiences being affected in ways that seemed strange to many; uncontrollable laughter, weeping, rolling on the floor and making animal noises.

Evaluation and assessment:

- + Supporters of the blessing saw these events as sign of God doing things in a different way.
- + Corporate exps look convincing because many people have them, most other exps other than these are private and cant be explained.
- + Such experiences should be judged on the effects they produce, are they life changing? Shouldn't be based on how strange or unreliable it seems.
- But sceptics and critics suggested these experiences, especially Toronto Blessing, are mass hysteria.
- Other critics of the Toronto Blessing argue that it doesn't fit with Biblical experiences and isn't the way God works.
- Some criticisms specify that because it is a group experience, it is possible that the feelings are caused because they are in a group, humans are social people and they tend to enjoy things more as a group. So may be this isn't God showing himself, it could all be psychological.

Revelation and religious scripture; Explain and Assess God being revealed through revelations:

- ⇒ Revelation means = "The disclosure from the divine of something previously hidden".
- ⇒ Two types of Revelation =
 - 1) Natural Theology/General Revelation - e.g. knowing God by seeing the design and environment around us. There are signs of God's creation in the world. Includes the beauty of creation and conscience - these are all interpreted as the voice of God.
 - 2) Revealed theology/Special Revelation - Revealed information about God by God to prophets. E.g. Torah to Moses, Quran to Muhammad.
- ⇒ The method of God's revelation = 1) creation, 2) conscience, 3) Religious Experience, 4) scripture, 5) miracles.
- ⇒ If We say the Bible is the 2nd type of revelation then was God revealing facts or information (**propositional revelation**) or was he making himself known during the revelation (**non-propositional revelation**). Both are widely held by believers, some held at the same time. E.g. Christians say that the Bible is propositional and all other RE's are non-propositional.
- ⇒ **Propositional Revelation:**
 - ❖ Revelation of scripture understood as propositional.
 - ❖ When God revealed himself to the writers of the scripture he revealed truths about himself.
 - ❖ Aquinas; faith is understood as 'belief that' - to accept God's revelation we must believe that certain propositions are true. E.g. the belief that Jesus is God's son.

Criticisms:

- The receiver of the revelation is just passive when getting the message. But many people have shown that psychologically many people cannot receive knowledge passively, instead the mind gets things actively. E.g. if you hear some gossip you have to remember it actively to be able to relay it.
 - How can one know which revelations are true propositions? Despite trying to fit it with Church criteria and studying the after-effects, it doesn't guarantee that the revelation is genuine.
 - There is no way to verify that propositional revelations are real.
- ⇒ **Non-Propositional Revelation:**
- ❖ More modern approach, God revealed to writers via RE's, truths are not communicated, the experience is beyond description.
 - ❖ But people who experience later try to put their experience into words.
 - ❖ Schleiermacher believes that the Bible was a result of writers reflecting on their RE's.
 - ❖ Faith in these types of revelations = 'belief in' - not a matter of facts but trust.

Criticisms

- Non-propositional revelations are the result of human understanding and cannot therefore reveal anything direct about God. This means they are not as perfect as propositional revelations because they come from humans.
- You can't get solid doctrines from this type of revelation. Because things would always be a matter of difference based on experiences.
- The content is a matter of interpretation - Paley sees the design in the world as prove for a designer, but Dawkins sees the same beauty but reaches a different conclusion.

Can we trust the Bible?

- No = religions persecuted scientists, like Galileo, and rejected Darwin because he rejected the Bible.
 - Even religious people say that the writing of the Bible was a human process, so the stories themselves may have been passed down and altered.
 - Bible is interpreted in many ways, the Old Testament laws seem outdated and the Bible causes difficulties for its believers and for other people.
-
- ❖ Yes = the difficulties between religion and science are due to people taking the Bible too literally.
 - ❖ Just because humans were involved in writing the Bible, doesn't mean there were mistakes. God guided the process of revelation throughout.

- ❖ Bible is hard to understand, that's what causes different interpretation, the Old Testament laws are no longer applicable because of the arrival of Jesus.
- ❖ One must think about the influence of the Bible because millions believe in it.

Miracles - Revision notes

Know and understand the main definitions given to the concept of miracles.

- There are 3 definitions of miracles
 - 1) **An event caused by God** - traditional view by Aquinas.
 - 2) **A violation of the Laws of Nature by a supernatural being** - Hume.
 - 3) **Events having religious significance** - R.F. Holland.
- Aquinas' shows the religious belief about miracles i.e. God causes them.
- Others add that miracles caused by God but also reveal him.
- Hume's more modern. Miracle = an event breaking laws of nature and how the universe normally works. E.g. Moses parting the sea with staff.
- Hume thinks that Christianity is based on miracles. Therefore Christianity isn't reasonable because it goes against human experience.
- **Mel Thompson**; miracles are a matter of interpretation, doesn't matter how it's defined.
- Objection to violation definition:
 - Assumes we know all laws of nature, scientific knowledge is always changing, maybe things aren't as we see them - gravity may not be true. Unless we know all about laws, we can't infer about miracles.
- Are miracles **just events given religious significance**? Problem with this is; excludes coincidences. Example of this definition given by **Holland - Boy and train**.
Boy playing on the line, train is approaching but can't stop in time, amazingly though it stops a few metres from the boy. Later they find that the driver fainted and the automatic cut off switch stopped train. These events are natural but boys mum sees them as act of God.
- Hence, miracles can be natural things, but given religious tags.
- **Problem with this = it's all subjective**, but the good thing is it allows more natural events to be called miracles, but this can have the opposite effect of making anything natural a miracle.

Explain Hume's views on miracles including his criticisms of the concept

- ❖ **Hume's Probability argument**: An empiricist, so any miracle event should be measured against available evidence.
- ❖ We understand everything through human exp of cause and effect relationships the more we see them the less likely opposite would happen. E.g. our experiences shown us that water comes to boil at 100 degrees, it never occurs at 200 degrees because our experience shows 100.
- ❖ Because miracles are not normal events they are unreliable, they violate laws/exps.
- ❖ Miracle testimonies would have to be measured against human experience.
- ❖ If miracles to be taken seriously their accounts would need to be of such quality that they are hard to falsify. And that not believing them would be stupid.
- ❖ Effectively he's arguing that it's always reasonable to reject extraordinary events as being contrary to human experiences than to believe them. Thus miracles = impossible.

He doesn't believe in God, so he asks us to look at what is more probable, a miracle or ordinary experience?

❖ **Violation of laws + poor testimony = grounds to reject claims.**

➤ **Hume's practical arguments;** Hume said practically speaking miracles can't happen.

- 1) There aren't enough educated people that see miracles, most are ignorant people who have nothing to lose. It would be more believable if from educated person who has something to lose.
- 2) We are naturally curious about strange things. This tendency is exploited by religious people - spread false accounts for a good cause.
- 3) Hume thinks only barbarous nations experience miracles, and not seen in the modern age.
- 4) Conflicting claims - different religions different claims, they can't all be right.

Assess whether Hume's criticisms of miracles are successful

- Hume's appeal to laws of nature seems to contradict himself, earlier he says that laws might be a psychological habit based on what we see.
- Practical points are generalisations, who are the ignorant nations?
- Miracles do happen in the modern age, he has no evidence that they don't.
- Swinburne; testimonies don't have to be the only evidences. Physical traces of events can be evidence.
- Swinburne; what is an educated person? How many is enough to trust the testimony? In the modern age, many educated people experience miracles.
- Just because miracles happen in different religions, doesn't mean they cancel each other out.

Understand the concept of miracle as presented in the Bible and have an awareness of some of the issues it raises

What is the purpose of miracles?

- ⇒ Shows God's **goodness**, and that he responds to prayers.
- ⇒ Shows God's **power** over everything - including laws.
- ⇒ God's always **involved** and active.
- ⇒ Message of **Jesus** -> shows he's from God.

☆ Miracles in Bible (OT and NT) show that God acts in the world, **prime example from OT of Joshua 10 - God helping him to defeat the 5 kings.**

☆ Miracles in the Old Testament (OT) are acts of God that support the faithful. Demonstrating the glory of God and punishment to the disbelievers.

☆ Central miracle is Exodus - the plagues and the parting of the sea.

☆ Joshua 10: a key miracle story showing God's power, some of the key issues;

- ☆ Victory is God's, He is the one who controls and wields real power not Joshua.
- ☆ God throwing the enemy into confusion - shows God's involvement in the war.
- ☆ In the story God is said to use the laws of the world. God operates and involves Himself through events in the world.
- ☆ God's omnipotence is shown when he makes the sun stand still = **shows God is immanent and involved in the world.**

- † New Testament (NT) miracles centred on Jesus. Miracle stories divided into 3 types 1) Healings, 2) Exorcisms and 3) Nature miracles (e.g. walking on water).
- † **Miracles of Jesus were signs showing God revealing Him to the people.** These signs were realities to the people and helped people believe in God.
- † It is not entirely correct to say that biblical miracles violate the laws, because the stories were written during a time when people were unaware of the laws, so what appeared strange to them may actually have been a natural event. Nevertheless these are still signs showing God.
- † Jesus' birth, resurrection and death are all miracles. The resurrection for Christians is the most important act of God, because it opens up eternal life to everyone.
- † **Dr David Jenkins** however says the Jesus miracles need not be taken literally, but most Christians would disagree with him.
- † One issue that rises from biblical miracles is **bias against God e.g. Joshua goes to battle he never loses because God favours him.**
- † In the OT God favours the Israelites because of their Covenant [a binding agreement]. They worship God - God protects them.
- † Looking at the '**sun standing still**' miracle it can only be explained as **a violation**. But this brings up the questions on why evil exists if God has the power to intervene and stop it. Maybe because God is still a mystery
- † Bible shows God intervening but philosophers ask if God has power then why doesn't he stop suffering?

How miracles are understood.

- Advancements over last 200yrs has caused many to question the reality of Biblical miracles, instead they say we should extract the important moral from the stories. Maybe stories like Jesus walking on water need not be seen literally?
- Gunkel; we see accounts of miracles as they were told by word of mouth before they were written, actual account may be different.
- Bultmann; tries to **demythologise** NT stories, by removing the supernatural parts [demons, voice from the sky etc]. This will allow us to get closer to the real message of Jesus, instead of the miraculous interpretation of the Church.
- Traditional scholars disagree with Gunkel and Bultmann - accounts are real not additions.

Explain and assess the view of Wiles that miracles would lead to an arbitrary and partisan God

- ❖ Wiles ; God's actions should not be for particular instances but be on the world as a whole, otherwise this would create problems such as being arbitrary [actions based on random choice] and partisan [supporting one side].
- ❖ A God that interferes with laws of nature = arbitrary - if God does intervene why's there suffering? Why not intervene when a child suffers?
- ❖ The goodness of God and miracles are incompatible - God helping one but not another wouldn't be good.
- ❖ So rejects God violating laws and acting for particular people, God's only activity = to create and sustain.
- ❖ "The world as a whole is a single act of God" (Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*)
- ❖ His rejection of miracles set by these arguments:
 1. Miracles are violations of laws, this means they must happen very rarely otherwise the laws become meaningless.
 2. The pattern of miracles seems strange and even unfair.

3. All these un-prevented evil events raise questions about God's goodness and power.
- ❖ How can God act in world, but not prevent Holocaust? If God has the power to intervene to stop evil, why doesn't he all the time?
 - ❖ Regarding miracles, there's a contradiction -> one person is healed, but thousands die in a tsunami. Creates problem of evil.
 - ❖ God intervening after someone prays also rejected, if God does all this it shows him to be arbitrary and partisan, as the biblical miracles suggest.
 - ❖ Solution = to see God as the sustainer of his single creative act, this way God's activity is always present, rather than at certain points. This way all problems are removed.

Assessing Wiles:

- **Strengths:** Wile's view appeals to educated believers as it allows them to believe in God and scientific laws.
- Possibly solves the problem of evil. God does not intervene because he either cannot or he is bound by laws of nature.
- Reinterpretation of prayer, and possibly explains why some prayers aren't answered; it isn't about asking things from God, but about creating a link with God's will.
- **Weaknesses:** not according to traditional religious views on God. It is saying that religious people have misunderstood the Bible and miracles for over 2000yrs. Biblical miracles show clearly that God does act in the world e.g. story in **Joshua 10** where the sun stood still while they fought.
- To say that miracle stories show God's love and power loses impact when you argue that God isn't able to intervene in the world.
- It's not appropriate to make God conform to human rationality. God may act in ways that are beyond our reasoning.
- Polkinghorne; Wiles argument doesn't reflect Christian religious experience of God. e.g. Wiles rejects the traditional understanding of prayers, but many people claim that God actually answers their prayers when they ask.

Responses by religious believers:

- † Defending the existence of natural evil on the grounds; this is part of the ordered world we live in, and if God intervenes continually to stop suffering we wouldn't be able to understand and learn at all.
- † God does act in the world, but we fail to recognise it. E.g. everyone blames God for the Tsunami but what about the masses of people that survived despite the odds?

Explain modern views on the concept of miracles [these can be used to evaluate Hume]

▶ **Flew:**

- Accepts Hume, no evidence for miracles, the wise man would reject miracles.
- The **historian approach** to backup Hume; historians only have evidence of a miracle if they were actually there.
- This doesn't happen so we rely on **indirect evidence**.
- We compare to things we already know to figure out the fact.
- So when we hear stories about water turning to wine, our experience tells us this doesn't happen because we've never seen it. So we have to reject this story based on what evidence tells us.

▶ **C.S. Lewis:**

- △ Defending miracles; people are either **naturalists or supernaturalists**
- △ **Naturalists** believe **world is physical** and nothing else exists. **Supernaturalists** believe same but believe in **God and soul too**.

- △ If one is naturalist, then = self-defeating because we are all physical things subject to physical laws. This shows your belief isn't an active belief, it is just physically caused.
- △ If you accept God though, then it's possible to believe in miracles.
- △ When the naturalist rejects this they are assuming that the world is purely physical.
- ▶ **Swinburne:**
 - ✓ There is more evidence than looking at the testimonies, e.g. memories, testimonies of others, medical examinations = more evidence the more probable miracles happen.
 - ✓ Plus, natural laws not fixed truths. Many are just statistical laws - they tell us the most probable, but the particles do not necessarily abide by these laws.
 - ✓ There is a difference between a formula being a law and a formula being a truth without exception.
 - ✓ God can suspend natural laws to intervene. E.g. of parent giving child boundaries. At one point parent may relax boundary to reaction to child's request - God may work the same way.
 - ✓ Miracles must happen once in a while, if happened regular life would be strange, as we wouldn't know if laws such as gravity would operate.
 - ✓ Occasional miracles avoid humans from becoming lazy and expecting miracles. If God always healed cancer then humans wouldn't be actively looking for a cure.
- ▶ **Polkinghorne:**
 - ⇒ Science only tells us the normal expectations.
 - ⇒ But it may be possible for God to act in new ways when circumstances change.
 - ⇒ Laws do not generally change, but can change if God starts to deal with humans in a new way.
 - ⇒ E.g. = Jesus' death and resurrection shows a new age in God's dealings with people.

Assess whether modern people can be expected to believe in miracles

- ⇒ The Bible gives a picture of a world in which God is the Creator and is involved and helps followers. Does this picture of God's activity make sense to modern people?
- ⇒ Whether modern people can believe in miracles requires addressing the problems raised by God acting in the world, like in Joshua 10 [e.g. biased God], and by looking at the arguments against miracles being real [e.g. problem of evil].
- ⇒ The views of the philosophers [above] shows that some try understand a belief in miracles by taking new approaches to making sense of miracles [Swinburne and Polkinghorne]
- ⇒ Others take the more scientific view like that of Flew's.
- ⇒ Hume's claim that miracles don't happen in the modern age is flawed as many cases of miracles are seen today
- ⇒ Kant and others may be right is saying that religious issues are a matter on faith, one is either supernaturalist or naturalist [Lewis] taking whatever way they wish. Whatever path one takes requires faith in that position.
- ⇒ To believe in God or miracles requires faith, scientific logic of this age cannot fully assess miracles or God.
- ⇒ Hume wrote so long ago, also he relies on inductive/empirical evidence. It is possible in this complex modern era that new empirical evidence can challenge Hume, like the argument of Swinburne's.

- ⇒ The fact that miracles occurring is a slim chance, it doesn't mean that it is irrational miracles occur. But because it is an inductive argument neither does this mean Hume is wrong.
- ⇒ Besides the definition of miracles, it is possible to understand miracles as normal events, but people giving them religious significances. This takes out the irrationality but creates the problem of what would be known as a miracle? Also this type of miracle doesn't reflect the Christian/Biblical view of miracles, where God does do law-breaking things.
- ⇒ Wiles; allows educated people to believe in God and uphold scientific laws. But the understanding of miracles is lost. Though it may be possible to keep up the understanding of R.F Holland's view on miracles because this doesn't need a violation.
- ⇒ Ockham's razor; possible to use Ockham's argument but with a modern adaptation - with all the complexities of the modern age, there are still many things that science hasn't answered, therefore the simplest explanation may be the most probable - that is God.

Explain the connection between miracles and the problem of evil and Assess whether a belief in miracles solves or adds to the problem of evil

- ✓ Being all-powerful would include the ability to do miracles.
- ✓ Goodness includes fairness; if God is all-good then he should treat people equally, but doing miracles shows he is helping some people over others.
- ✓ These problems have led to these four conclusions:

1) Rejecting miracles on theological grounds;

- Maurice Wiles would argue that a miracle-working God doesn't solve the problem of evil.
- Because miracles compromise goodness of God, it's unfair that God helps some and not others.
- Can be argued that, using Irenaeus' theodicy, the world allows us to grow through its hardships. If God intervenes all the time, we wouldn't ever grow.

Counterargument:

It still makes sense to suggest that God may act randomly in performing miracles in order to have impact on our lives. God gives mankind freedom to make any choice, to believe or not. It may be that miracles are signs to encourage people to respond to God.

2) Rejecting miracles scientifically;

- Some scientists say that nature has strict and closed laws.
- This raises another difficulty. Nature was made by God, natural evil is the responsibility of God.
- If he intervened to prevent it, it would show the world is not perfect. If he didn't intervene it would affect his goodness = paradox.

Counterargument:

Objections ignore effects of Free Will - Augustine's theodicy blames humans for evil because of a misuse of Free Will. This shows that God is doing us a favour intervening, but not obliged to clean up the mess.

3) Defending miracles as symbolic stories:

- Bultmann saw the stories of miracles in the NT as additions that would inspire us to follow God.
- Miracles accounts should be read symbolically than literally, teaching us about the extent of God's power.

- Helps solve the problems of evil as God doesn't literally intervene in an arbitrary way - which shows he's fair.
- But one remaining issue = why does God not intervene, maybe he can't or chooses not to?

Counterargument:

Bultmann may be right, but the stories would be more effective if they were actually true. Of course these miracles do seem out of the world. But God surely can do that?

4) Defending literal belief in miracles:

- Miracles reveal God's power, and they go against natural laws. Some punish and some help. Does this solve evil?
- Believers point to God's overall plan for the Kingdom of God and return of Jesus. It's here evil will be rid of. God knows more than us, so everything may seem out of place, but it'll turn out to be for the good.

Counterargument:

This may be valid, but it is a faith position, therefore not verifiable or falsifiable.

Attributes of God - Revision notes

This topic looks at 4 traditional attributes of God & different understandings of them 1) Eternal [everlasting or timelessness], 2) Omnipotence [all-powerful], 3) Omniscient [all-knowing] and 4) Omni-benevolent [all-good].

The task is to try to fit all these attributes into the understanding of God, like a suitcase. Some things are essential, but other things get left out. Adjusting the definition of one of these has implications on the other.

Believers say that God is paradoxical, e.g. God is both immanent and transcendent. But others would say that this paradox appears as so because we are limited and can't understand God's nature. Difficulties trying to fit all the pieces together led some to become deists - seemed more logical to believe in an all-powerful God who no longer involves Himself in the world.

Simplicity:

- To understand eternity need to understand God's simplicity.
- God is said to be 'simple' - this doesn't mean that he has limited power or prefers a boring existence. Rather it is thought of as not changing, not having parts or characteristics. This makes him simple.
- Unlike humans, we have hairstyles, mannerisms, eye colour etc that give us unique characteristics.
- By saying God is simple theologians mean God doesn't change and is immaterial.
- This is important because knowing that God is not physical changes our understanding of the rest of the attributes.

Know about different views on what it means to say that God is Eternal

- Everyone agrees God is Eternal, but does God's eternity mean he is inside time or out?
- Either God is:
 - 1) Timeless = past, present and future are all present to God.
 - 2) Everlasting = immortal but within time.
 - 3) Moving through time and changing with it = Process Theology [follows on from 2].
- Plato agreed with 1) - God's eternity is infinitely superior to the temporal. Movement and change are part of the world of appearances, but not for God.
- Early Christians took this view e.g. Boethius and Augustine - God has a "total and simultaneous possession of unending life". i.e. He's timeless, but neither does he change and experience events one after the other.
- Modern philosophers have challenged; God is eternal but in time [Swinburne] or God is everlasting [Kenny, Pike].
- Philosophers such as Paul Helm argue God is Timeless, but Everlasting theorist say Timelessness is unbiblical.

God as Timelessness/Eternal:

- Why is God seen as Timeless? 1) Bible said God always existed, 2) God isn't physical, 3) God's the Creator of the universe suggests being out of time, 4) God is the cause of why everything exists, 5) God's existence is necessary.
- God outside of time and sees all events as an eternal present. Our fifth birthday, GCSE exams, degree graduation etc are all a present and 'now' to God.
- Augustine "The years neither come nor go, whereas ours does".
- Time does not affect God, He is outside of it, He does not change with time because he is Immutable [unchanging].
- Aquinas' analogy of Timelessness; "He who goes along the road doesn't see all those coming before or after. Whereas he who sees the whole road from a height sees all at once those travelling on it."
- Meaning; God exists unendingly without start or finish, he must exist outside of time, because time consists of parts and time involves starts and finishes.
- Boethius; God is Timeless in that he observes everything in 'one glance'. God is Timeless because He is simple and therefore cannot learn new things.
- Remember however that Christians also believe God is Immanent, so this means God is timelessly eternal separate from time, yet still engages with us. This is immediately incoherent.

God as Everlasting:

- ❖ Regarded as more Biblical view and more widespread. He moves through time with us, but still doesn't change and has always existed.
- ❖ **Stephen Davis:** gives 3 reasons why everlastingness is better;
 - 1) God's creative activity make more sense if we say he exists in time. Because if God makes a temporal thing his act of making it is itself temporal and in time.
 - 2) A timeless being can't be the loving God of the Bible, such a timeless God would have to be lifeless and impersonal, and that's not what the Bible reflects.
 - 3) Notion of simultaneous time leads to absurdities e.g. 3021BC not earlier than 2010 for God, makes time seem illusory. No reason to think that so Timelessness is incoherent.
- ❖ Everlasting notion makes better sense of God's OP and OS without creating a problem for human free will.
- ❖ Swinburne; supports everlasting - doesn't make sense to say everything is simultaneous to God, everlasting fits better with the Bible, as it shows that God interacts with people.

- ❖ Cullman; textual analysis of the Bible shows eternal should be understood as Everlasting. Most logical translation of eternal = endless duration not outside of time.
- ❖ Stories such as Joshua 10 - which shows God helping him win the war - suggests that he is everlasting.
- ❖ Saying God is Everlasting doesn't lessen his power - all it is stating his existence without end.

Process Theology [e.g. A.N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne]:

- △ Accept that God moves through time with his creation - similar to everlasting
- △ Yet the difference = God is affected by this interaction. God's in the process of becoming and changes with us.
- △ Although God is powerful he is not OP.

D.Z. Phillips:

- Has a completely different idea of eternity, God's 'eternity' conveys an idea that completely incomprehensible. Our sense of time is one thing. But God's eternity is something totally different.

Criticisms of Timelessness:

- 1) Time not applying to God contradicts plain reading of Bible - it speaks of him promising and remembering.
Counter: Supporters of Timelessness say that Bible stories metaphorical rather than literal.
- 2) Timeless God seems like a heartless God. A God who is personal or active with creation doesn't fit with timelessness as such a God cannot interact within time and would logically have to be removed.
Counter: but with timelessness it's easier to believe that God is Immutable [unchanging]. If God within time [everlasting] then it proposes that he may change. E.g. his knowledge that England will win the world cup in 1966 'changed' to knowledge that they won after the event.
- 3) Kenny; it's absurd to say God timeless because tomorrow, yesterday and today are all happening at the same time seems like nonsense.
Counter: God looks at all events from outside at 'one glance'
Furthermore - one can point to number '3' and there's no problems to understand it timelessly, so why not God?
- 4) Arthur Prior [linking OS and Eternity]; treating God's knowledge as timeless would restrict his knowledge to truths (if any) that are known timelessly. E.g. '2010 A2 exams are now over' isn't something known timelessly, because it isn't known timelessly. So technically timelessness restricts God's OS because how can he know all temporaries? Needs to know these to know his creation.
Counter: Helm; can know temporary things at a glance, just like some can solve a crossword puzzle at a glance [simultaneity].
Furthermore - difference between divine simultaneity and human simultaneity = e.g. one watching train pass, lightning flashes it at the front and back which person outside sees. But person within train the lightning isn't simultaneous.
- 5) Davis; God's creative activity makes more sense if he was everlasting. For when God makes a temporal being [e.g. human] then that creative act itself would have to be temporal and within time.
Counter: Hugh McCann; though things are brought in at some time, doesn't mean that God has to exist at some time to bring them about, he can act from outside.
Furthermore - timelessness advocates say we must understand God's nature in ways that maximises his perfection. So Everlastingness may make his love more understandable to

us, but this anthropomorphises him [makes him human-like], and because timelessness is beyond our understanding, it adds to his perfection.

Helm's conclusion: it is coherent to say that God timelessly knows something and that he timelessly desires and acts in way we may not understand but he does, because he is God. This makes him more perfect. This all shows that God possibly exists as a Timeless being.

Criticisms of Everlastingness:

1) It is hard to see how God is within time but avoids changing or being affected somehow. After all we are changed by our interactions with others as time progresses.

Counter: however, this is the only alternative that allows us to fulfil the task of preserving OP and OS and his action in the world, plus it is more Biblical.

2) Everlastingness puts God under human rationality, but God is beyond our reason, furthermore it makes God seem human-like, therefore it limits his perfection.

Understand the difficulties in defining God as omnipotent (OP) and some possible solutions to these difficulties

- A key attribute of God. Christian tradition shows that God's power allows all things to be possible (e.g. Luke 1:37).
- When defining OP would say God can do anything, but can he sin? Run, jump, lick ice cream? Could he make a 5-sided triangle? Can he make $2+2=200$?
- These are some problems OP raises. But there are 3 different ways at looking at OP:
 - 1) God can do anything, even logically impossible.
 - Descartes supports - God could change the laws of nature
 - But many others have seen this as incoherent and not the meaning of OP.
 - Descartes' view destroys any rational talk of God at all.
 - Aquinas; God abides by logic, but does absolutely possible. logically impossible actions [$2+2=5$] aren't real actions. No 'proper things' so can't even apply that to God.
 - **Paradox of the Stone:** Can God make a stone heavier for him to lift?
Yes = you have found something God can't do [lifting it]
No = you have also found something he can't do [not creating it]
Is there always one of these he can't do? = paradox.
 - Aquinas counter; it's silly to even ask this paradox because this isn't even a real action, meaningless for OP.
 - 2) Doing anything logically possible that a perfect being can do.
 - But it is incorrect to suggest that God sins because it is impossible for Him to lie.
 - Augustine; this is because this is not what a OP God would do, it is impossible for any OP being to sin or act immorally as this is contrary to OP.
 - Counter: this still doesn't solve the problem because you are still limiting God by saying he cant do some things!
 - Despite this, this definition more accepted. It talks about what is logically possible for God to do, such things may not be logically possible for us though.
 - E.g. it's logically possible for God to create a universe, but not for us.
 - Aquinas; God's power = OP because it's infinite, because he is infinite [timeless].
 - Whatever involves a contradiction [like the stone] is not held by OP because it can't be made possible. The nature of a contradiction = that no one can understand it.

- To preserve Goodness and God's immaterialness Kenny says this is a good definition. But it is a narrower OP which allows him to do logically possible.
 - Plantinga; God may choose to limit his OP to allow free will.
 - Hang on! God limits his OP?? Surely, this shows that he no longer OP if he limits it?
 - Some say this is a better definition as it avoids problems from 1) but it has it's own - i.e. to take 2) as the OP it's saying that God can do all things that God can do! It doesn't tell us anything about OP.
 - God cannot sin because goes against his goodness [OB].
 - Geach; criticises 2) as it relies on the acceptance of a particular view of God's nature as perfect, which not everyone may accept. This leads him to suggest that OP be understood as a statement of his power rather than power to do everything.
- 3) OP = just a statement of the power of God, that's all.
- Geach; NT Greek word for OP = Pantokrator = 'almighty'. This understood as a capacity for power and power over everything rather than to do everything.
 - Kenny; OP = a statement, "A being is OP if it has every power which it is logically possible to possess".

Are there solutions to the paradoxes shown by these definitions?

- △ Mavrodes' solution; the task of the Paradox of the Stone is impossible for someone such as God, assuming he has unlimited power, it's self-contradictory, how can an unlimited being not do something? Therefore for a OP being it's impossible
- △ Savage; God can't draw a square-circle, failure to draw a circle shows a failure in my maths skills. But failure to do a square-circle doesn't show any lack of skills, because it's impossible. This analogy can be applied to God and the stone.
- △ Stone analogy therefore fails, because the very OP of God makes Stone impossible.
- △ Harry Frankfurt; if God is able to do one impossible thing, he can do another impossible thing by lifting that stone. So OP not incoherent - in fact shows how OP he is!
- △ Plantinga and Swinburne; God's OP would allow to make stone, but would lessen his OP if he does - might stop being OP.
- △ Wittgenstein; the paradox doesn't need to bother religious believers because this is not about what God's OP is about.
- △ Ockham; two powers of God. 1) absolute power of God - the power he had before he committed himself to a particular way of action and laws. Before creation God could have done anything like creating the world or not. 2) ordained power of God - refers to options currently available to God. now he has made the world, he can do many things within it, but cant uncreate it once he has chosen to create it in the past.

Criticism's of OP:

1) Can God change the past?

Response: God can't change the past as this would affect what we know to be. This is a contradiction which is illogical and God can't do illogical, unless you follow definition 1).

2) Can God sin?

Responses: 1) no, will stop his perfection, 2) no, because sin causes change, and he can't change, 3) no, sin involves a lack of power over actions, but God always has control. Even if he did something that seemed bad, because he OS, he may know something we don't. Nelson Pike: God's OP would allow him to sin, but because he is morally good, he would never do it, otherwise he wouldn't be free and his goodness wouldn't be worthy of praise.

3) OP relies on pre-existing concept of God's nature and perfect.

Responses: OP is an aspect of God's nature and is thus a statement of how God is and is an aspect of God's perfection.

4) Can God make a stone too heavy to lift?

Responses: [see above]

Understand the difficulties involved in discussing God's omniscience (OS)

- ⇒ God knowing everything considered an essential belief. Does it mean he knows everything? Or are there limits?
- ⇒ We gain knowledge through the senses, but God is immaterial and doesn't have these. So does God know for example what chocolate tastes like?
- ⇒ Someone can study food for ages, but will only more about it once they experience it.
- ⇒ This suggests that God's knowledge is restricted in terms of senses.
- ⇒ Response = to separate knowledge and sensations. God can have all the knowledge we have but doesn't need the sensations to have complete knowledge of things.
- ⇒ 2 definitions:
 - 1) Unlimited knowledge; all history, past, present and future. This view fits with timelessness because it argues that God is outside of time and observes the whole time continuum.
 - 2) Limited OS; knowledge is limited to what is logically possible to know or God chooses to limit what he knows to allow humans free will. God's knowledge changes over time as he gets new knowledge as things happen. Fits with everlasting.

How does God know anything?

- If God is eternal his knowledge can't be the same as ours. We have knowledge gained through senses, which God can't get.
- If God is Simple, he doesn't get knowledge the way we do through learning.
- Aquinas; God has knowledge because it is not physical. Humans get knowledge but again it's not physical, e.g. square roots are not physical things but we still know them.
- Knowledge being non-physical means God who is immaterial can have knowledge.
- God's knowledge is self-knowledge, i.e. he knows what he creates.
- Aquinas; God has perfect knowledge what is more perfect than knowing all that there is to be known?
- His knowledge is **occurrent** i.e. he actively knows things to be true, human knowledge is more **dispositional** i.e. what we are inclined to believe, this can obviously be false, but God knows all that is true, not false.
- However if it is to know 'everything' not only does he need to know that 'Helm is married' but also the meaning of 'I am married', this can only be known if he exists in time, because then he may have an idea of what it feels like to be married.
- If God was timeless he wouldn't be able to 'know' the differences between "I'm glad today is Friday" and "I was glad yesterday was Friday". But **Kenny** says these actually describe the same fact, which shouldn't be a problem for God's OS.

The limits of God's knowledge.

- If the everlasting view taken then God can gain new knowledge as time progresses.
- OS in this understanding = what is logically possible for God to know. So if future is not to be known.
- This doesn't limit OS because it's impossible to know what is going to exist or does not exist.
- God is perfect in that he knows everything that is happening and happened.

Middle knowledge.

- ✓ Possible OS includes this. This is a bank of certain other choices, what would happen if things happened differently.
- ✓ He knows all the possibilities of your life. like a flow chart, He knows what would happen if you failed your A levels or passed them.
- ✓ Problem with this is all these 'what ifs' actual knowledge? Or fake? Can't tell that OS has this.

Does OS include knowledge of future?

- ❖ Bible says yes [Psalm 139: 16], but philosophers debate whether it can be called knowledge because it hasn't happened yet.
- ❖ However his knowledge is different to ours, he may know all the possible choices.
- ❖ **Problem caused by looking at OS with OP, Flew and Mackie argue that God must have seen that evil things were going to happen, so could have used his OP to make people who freely do good.

Criticisms of OS:

- ▶ **Free will [FW]:** is God OS then how is man free?
- ▶ God has all knowledge, so say if he knew you would have cornflakes for dinner and you did, there's nothing you can do about it.
- ▶ If you make a last minute decision to have bread, he knew you were going to do that. So seems OS and FW incompatible.

Responses to the problem:

- This is a problem for **Libertarians** who believe that they are totally free, because it would be hard to fit OS and FW together, plus FW wouldn't make sense if OS was there.
- Some are **hard determinists** who say no FW, it is just apparent, e.g. **Calvinism** - Christian theology that fits into this. This allows humans to be casually responsible for their actions but not morally responsible, because God already knew.
- Solution 1; Process theology, don't believe in OS in traditional sense.
- Solution 2; timelessness - God is outside time he knows but doesn't cause our actions.
- Solution 3; everlastingness - moves through time and knows everything possible, knows futures but doesn't cause them.
- **Solution of Boethius; timelessness holds key to keeping both eternity, OS and FW, because foreknowledge isn't in God's case foreknowledge at all. God is eternal presence, all time is present to him. Foreknowledge is like a never ending presence.

Understand what it means to describe God as omni-benevolent (OB)

- ❖ God is Good - means many things = love, goodness, justice, creation, holiness etc.
- ❖ Goodness of God different from human terms. So what does it mean for God?
- ❖ **God is Simple and Perfect, only a perfect being could be worthy of worship. God's goodness, along with OP and OS were held to be part of this perfection.
- ❖ Swinburne drawn analogy of OB with that of the role of a parent. Therefore, God's goodness may at times involve both rewarding and punishing his creation, as a parent would.

What is the link between God and goodness?

- Euthyphro dilemma poses the question of the link. Does he set the standards of good/bad or were the standards already there, so he made things good/bad.

Can God do evil?

- Some think that God's OB is lesser if he can only do good, he must have the ability to do evil as well.

- If you saw an old person crossing the road and 'chose' to help her then that would make you better than someone who was forced to do it.
- ****Others say, God can't do evil because it's part of his nature not to. This links with OP it all depends on whether you think that the inability to do evil is a genuine limitation.**

Should a good God reward and punish?

- Part of God's goodness = justice, he will judge at the end of time, this will separate the just from the evil.
- ****This idea of rewards and punishments may lead to religious morality being selfish, people may just be good for heaven, but if God is OS he'll see their true intentions.**
- ****OS brings problems = if he knows that our actions will lead to hell it doesn't seem just for God to judge those actions.**
- Some say that if someone wanted to be evil then God's goodness should lead to no punishment for that person, because it was good for God to allow humans FW to do what they want. But then again, his goodness also should punish the person, because that is justice = creates a paradox.

If God is OB then why's there hell?

- Hell doesn't seem to go with OB
- Reaction to this some say all will be saved in the end - Irenaeus.
- Swinburne rejects this, human FW must include ability to damn ourselves if necessary.
- Some say heaven and hell are symbolic places, to just get us to follow God.

(AO2 Criteria) Assess the coherence of these concepts and explore the philosophical problems of asserting all of these attributes

*This section can be answered through uses all the discussion points from the previous sections. The relevant points that can be used here have been "***" to demonstrate applicability to this section.*

Assess the view that a good God ought not to reward or punish people

See OB section for info on this.

****Consider the views of Boethius and others on the issue of eternity and omniscience**

- ◆ What we understand about his ideas on these attributes is centred around what we see to be FW;
- ◆ 1) Liberty of spontaneity - doing what we want, this may lead to effects not aware of.
- ◆ 2) Liberty of indifference - the ability to do otherwise, possibly doesn't fit with OS.
- ◆ "The Consolation of Philosophy" - here find his ideas on foreknowledge;
 - Whatever God foresees must happen.
 - God doesn't cause our actions, but when he sees them they become necessary.
 - Problems it creates;
 - ⇒ It becomes pointless to reward or punish - as everything predestined.
 - ⇒ If foreseen but not prevented God is responsible?
 - ⇒ No point in praying, as outcome can't be changed.
 - Boethius' solution = foreknowledge isn't the cause of events happening, FW is the cause; God simply surveys the whole of time.
 - God = timeless, outside of whole continuum.

Evaluation:

- ◆ This avoids the idea of God seeing the future and not doing anything to prevent something.
- ◆ Kenny; all time present to God = absurd, or maybe humans just don't get it.
- ◆ How can a transcendent God know what's going inside earth? Does foreknowledge compromise his immutability?
- ◆ God would need middle knowledge to know outcome of human choices.

OS and everlastingness:

- ◆ Swinburne and Geach have maintained OS and FW without timelessness.
- ◆ Geach; like playing chess with a Grandmaster, you are free to move where ever you want. But the grandmaster will always win.
- ◆ Swinburne; as the future hasn't happened it cant logically be known. His knowledge includes all future events that are predictable by physical laws but leaves aside FW choices.
- ◆ But this weaknesses OS and is rejected by traditional Christians.

Life After Death (LAD) - Revision notes

LAD is disputed. There are many ideas about the survival after death these include;

- The continuation of our genes (Dawkins and evolutionists)
- Living on through our lives' works
- Living on in the memory of others
- Immortality of the Soul and Resurrection
- Reincarnation (Hinduism) and Rebirth (Buddhism)

These theories deal with individuals, but what is Personal identity? one's body, mind or both?

- ⇒ **Dualism**; two substances, the body and soul. The mind = identity; the body is the outer shell for the real self. The soul/mind is associated with higher realities, once the soul contemplates these it can enter eternity. This is known as Immortality of the soul.
- ⇒ **Different types of Dualism**; **1) Substance**; the idea that the body and soul are two different substances, soul lives on after body dies [Descartes and Plato], **2) Property**; the idea that the body has two properties that play the role of the material and soul, but they are one substance, body dies so does soul [Aristotle]
- ⇒ **Materialism/Monism**; our minds are inseparable from the bodies
 - No soul, only body. Death = non-existence. A person is nothing but a brain attached to a body like music is nothing but vibrations in the air.
 - **Gilbert Ryle**: soul thought to be "**Ghost in the machine**". But this is a mistake in the use of words and not real. E.g. "where's the team spirit" isn't meant literally.
 - Materialism can only accept afterlife if there is an exact physical life afterwards, similar to religious views of resurrection.
- ⇒ Two types of Materialism;
 - 1) **Soft materialism** - sees some brain activities more than just physical, e.g. a physical symptom may be because of something troubling the mind. But we're still our bodies, when the body dies, so do we.

2) **Hard materialism** - consciousness is only brain activity not any soul. When the body dies, so does the brain.

Explain the body-soul dualism of Plato and Assess the coherence of his view

- ⇒ **Plato**; the soul has the ability to know the truth, hence is the real self because the body is connected to an imperfect world, whereas the soul is connected to the Forms = truth.
- ▶ A substance dualist.
 - ▶ The soul can realise the unchanging truth therefore must itself be unchanging (immortal). It existed before birth as well as after death.
 - ▶ Soul is in three parts 1) Reason, 2) Emotion/Spirit, 3) Desires.
 - ▶ Used analogy of a Charioteer (guy who controls the Horses) and two horses: Reason = Charioteer who controls the two other horses (spirit and desires)
 - ▶ The soul survives death and lives on in the World of Forms eternally.
 - ▶ The soul existed in the realm of Forms and was pulled down to earth by the Desire. The body is a prison for the soul to liberate from.
 - ▶ Education isn't learning, but is the soul remembering from the world of Forms.
 - ▶ The soul and body are opposites; just like light and dark are known together they are still opposites. Death is the time when the soul leaves the body.
 - ▶ **Support for Plato:**
 - + We do experience ourselves as thinking beings different from our bodies.
 - + Reports of Near Death Experiences show proof of a separate existence from the body.
 - ▶ **Criticism of Plato:**
 - His view of immortality of the soul depends on us accepting the rest of his beliefs on the Theory of the Forms. If we don't agree, his ideas break.
 - There is no evidence that death is an opposite state to life.
 - Peter Geach; is it plausible to have existence in the world of Forms without a body? What would it be like? Is it real human existence, because what make us real are our bodies.

Arguments for Dualism:

- + Feeling love can't just be a physical thing.
- + There are many things about the brain and consciousness that science cannot explain, maybe there is a soul?
- + ESP and paranormal activities = prove soul

Arguments against Dualism:

- Dualism seems to treat a soul as a man that controls our bodies, but would that man need another man etc infinite regression of men?
- If my mind is immaterial then how do I know other people have minds like me? It's easier to believe in other minds if the brain was physical.

- How can the mind and body work together, how can something immaterial affect the material? Can a ghost ride a bike?
- Ockham: the Razor - simplest explanation, well one thing [brain] is more simple than two!
- Dawkins: no soul, all explained by brain and genetics.

Explain Dawkins' rejection of the traditional idea of the soul and Assess whether Dawkins is correct in his view

- ⇒ A Hard Materialist - **Richard Dawkins**; rejects immortal soul. Humans are nothing more than a total of their DNA. Life is a result of evolution and not creation. Only human genes are passed on to the next generation.
- ⇒ We survive death through the memories of others and the legacy we leave behind.
- ⇒ Humans consciousness has evolved because of the survival advantage it gives.
- ⇒ Soul is a myth created to explain the mysterious of consciousness.
- ⇒ Admits consciousness is still mysterious, he says science is able to make statements about personality based on genetic code. One day we'll unlock all the mysteries, then no need for religious idea of soul.
- ⇒ Talks of soul in metaphorical sense. Soul one = traditional view, Soul two = intellectual power, high development of mental faculties, deep feeling and sensitivity - this is a good way to talk about us, so long as it doesn't talk about a separate entity. Soul one is nonsense.
- ⇒ **Dawkins on LAD**: Religious views of LAD only true if we are able to survive death. We shouldn't fear death because it is simply the extinguishing of our consciousness - we will not know about it or feel it.

Explain Aristotle's dualism and consider how it differs from that of Plato

- A **property dualist**; someone who believes in the properties of mind and body but they are all one substance.
- This is different from Plato, who saw body and soul as separate. Aristotle would agree with the functions of a 'soul' but difference is soul dies with body.
- The soul is not additional to the object [i.e. body].
- Understand Aristotle through analogy; e.g. Beauty is understood by Plato as a separate thing even if no beautiful things existed. Aristotle - beauty is a property of beautiful things, without beautiful things there would be no beauty.
- It is similar to saying that the Soul is our personalities that we each have, it doesn't exist with addition to the body. The body is raw material [e.g. marble] soul = form [characteristics of the sculpture after made].
- The body isn't a prison of the soul as Plato says, but we are made up of body and soul.
- Aristotle's examples; **Axe** = if body was axe, soul = ability to chop, **Eye** = body is eye, soul = ability to see. Etc.
- Everything has a soul, but there are categories, we have a human soul made up of rational and irrational parts.
- Irrational parts = things plants and animals can do, vegetative and appetitive elements.
Plants = only vegetative

Animals = vegi and appetite - includes movement and desires.

Humans = all three.

- No LAD but thinks the ability to reason lives on after death. This is strange, because in what form would that be in? This conclusion could lead us back to Substance dualism.

Descartes and his critics;

Rejected everything and said that only certain thing is that "I think, therefore I am" that's what makes "I", whenever I think there must be something that is thinking. Proves I am more than just a body.

Gilbert Ryle - Descartes makes a category mistake in assuming something that is additional to the body. "Ghost in the machine".

Explain Hick's materialism and how his replica theory suggests the possibility of life after death

- ⇒ **John Hick**; Christian soul is not real, all it is = mental characteristics. The soul is the value of ourselves, not something separate.
- ⇒ Heretical Christian belief - Souls may be passed down through parents [**Traducianism**]? More fitting with Hick's view and avoids Christian belief they are implanted by God - which creates problems of acceptance.
- ⇒ **Replica Theory** - a person lives on as themselves after death as an exact replica. God is all-powerful and has no problem in doing this. This replica would be exactly the same, with the complete memories. Death destroys us, God re-creates us.
- ⇒ Rejects dualism but tries to maintain a materialistic understanding of bodily resurrection in an Afterlife.
- ⇒ Resurrection is a divine action where an replica of us is created in a different place [**analogy of John Smith**]
- ⇒ The analogy purpose - to demonstrate proof for Paul's view on resurrection, is it not logically possible that God can re-create John Smith in another world if an exact replica can be made through power of God? This is a close explanation to Paul's teaching.

Objections to Hick:

- There must be a break in continuity between the original John Smith body and the new body, so it is hard to say it is the same person.
- It is plausible to say many replicas could be made, which of these is 'Me'?
- John Hick believed our identity is our memories, but what about an Alzheimer's sufferer, they are still the same person.

Explain what is meant by the idea of resurrection

- ⇒ Christian understanding of the soul;
 - Personhood is associated with souls.
 - Humans are different from other things because of our souls.
 - Souls are the divine spark of God in us.

- "The Lord...breathed...the breath of life, and man became...living..." (Gen 2:7).
- Soul is the 'essential person' goes beyond reason. A machine can have logic and reason but never a soul like man.
- ⇒ **Swinburne**; "The Evolution of the Soul" - Soul survives as body dies. The soul is the thing that is capable of making choices and uses logic. We have consciences that let us know what is right and wrong because we have souls.
- ⇒ The belief that it is not just the individual's soul that survives but the body as well. The person is raised from the dead in bodily form.
- ⇒ The Re-Creation theory and Hick's Replica theory forms part of the belief in resurrection.
- ⇒ Resurrection based on idea of Jesus' resurrection. Yet the resurrected body of Jesus was physical yet different, he could walk through walls etc but needed nourishment. Led to the belief that such bodies are different in some way.
- ⇒ Paul [in **1 Corinthians 15: 42-44**] thought these bodies were different bodies "**Glorified bodies**" perfect bodies. Islam has a similar idea [see below].
- ⇒ NT - Paradise = a state of continued existence with God... (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)
- ⇒ Christians believe Jesus will come, judge and resurrect bodies and give new life to those who were good.
- ⇒ But before Jesus comes some ask, are the dead simply asleep or is there a middle stage?
- ⇒ In reaction some say that the soul goes to God straight after death.
- ⇒ Both Islam and Christianity believe in Heaven [an existence with God] and Hell [separation from God].
- ⇒ Catholic beliefs:
 - ◆ After death most go **Purgatory** where they get 'purged' or purified in order to prepare them for the **Beatific vision** [sight of God] in heaven.
 - ◆ These are then united with their glorified resurrection body, this is the final existence of man.
- ⇒ Protestant beliefs:
 - Varied beliefs, but no purgatory. Some see the resurrection as a spiritual event where the soul goes to God but no physical body needed.
 - Others agree with Paul's idea of a resurrected body.
 - Heaven is more of a community where people meet one and other. Some don't believe in hell.

Afterlife in Judaism:

- ✧ Not much about it in OT
- ✧ Belief of some sort of afterlife found in Psalms, but in later Jewish books [Daniel etc] find idea of resurrection.
- ✧ Some Jews believe that in the afterlife, in hell, there is a time when there is an annihilation - marking the end of you forever.

Afterlife [Akhira] in Islam:

- ⇒ Belief of resurrection is essential in Islam. The earthly life is a preparation for the next.
- ⇒ Dead people, waiting the day of judgement, live in an intermediate stage called the **Barzakh** [lit. Barrier]. This fills the gap that many ask Christians.
- ⇒ The Quran says that all will be resurrected it acts as proof for the existence of LAD.
- ⇒ Justice is served on the Day of Judgement, to do this one needs an afterlife - links with Kant Summum Bonum.
- ⇒ The Quran explicitly states that humans will be resurrected in bodily form "Does man think that we shall not assemble his bones? Yes, surely, yes we are able to restore the very shape of his fingertips" (75: 3-4).
- ⇒ Islam has a similar idea to distinct bodies like the "Glorified Bodies" concept; bodies are made differently to maximise the purpose of your abode. E.g. larger bodies in hell for maximum punishment, and youthful bodies in heaven for maximum pleasure.
- ⇒ Quran gives much imagery of Heaven [**Jannah**] and Hell [**Jahannam**] as literal places.
- ⇒ However God is merciful and can forgive anyone destined to hell.
- ⇒ Life on this earth would be horrible if no LAD, would be no control over what we do. Therefore resurrection and LAD has a big influence on a Muslim's life.

Assess the arguments for and against the idea of resurrection

- Resurrected bodies creates philosophical problems, suggests LAD must happen in some kind of space, since bodies take up room.
- **Peter Cole:** If Christians are in a physical resurrected state and environment will they have to queue to see Jesus? Where will this physical existence be? And what will they be doing all the time?
 - ▶ *Counter: Islam states that people will be judged on the earth but it will be reshaped into a flat plain, people will be standing on that plain awaiting judgement from God not Jesus. No one needs to stand in a queue to see the one that already sees all (i.e. God). Whereas, Muslims believe, Jesus is a man and will himself be judged.*
- In our post-death existence, would the resurrected body be living like we did in the earthly existence? If they are meant to be like the ones we have now then would we need the same physical needs?
 - ▶ *Christian counter: Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 15 that the bodies are physical but distinct, they are glorified*
 - ▶ *Muslim counter: Quran [Chapter 75: 3-4 -read above] shows that the questions stated in this criticism wouldn't be a problem for God to do.*
- Would a person who died at 103 be continually living at 103? Can a body get hurt? Can it lose weight? Etc
 - ▶ *Muslim Counter: Islam explains that the bodies in heaven will be perfect and middle aged. They will remain this age for eternity.*
- People who have imperfections in their bodies, will those imperfections be continued into the next life? If they don't then that body wouldn't be the same person.

- ▶ *Christian and Muslim counter: we will be in our perfected version of ourselves, we will all be given the ability by God to recognise each other despite a change in appearance.*
- Hick's replica theory logically demonstrates the possibility of a resurrection from a materialistic understanding. It is not a problem for God to replicate, not just copy, a person as he is Omnipotent.
- Peter Geach: resurrection is the only meaningful way which one can speak of LAD. Because it involves a resurrection of our physical bodies and not an abstract existence of a soul or reincarnation of a 'self'

Explain the idea of reincarnation [transmigration of the soul to another body]

Reincarnation, Hindu View:

- Key feature of Hindu belief, according to Hindus each person has an essential self called 'Atman' which is eternal and seeks unity with God or ultimate reality [Brahman].
- God manifests himself in the 'Atman' of each individual, and through the constant reincarnations the person readies themselves for the union with Brahman.
- Once the 'Atman' attains union there are no more reincarnations and there is release from the illusory world [Maya] called 'Moksha'.
- For a Hindu the body is nothing but a vehicle for the 'Atman', the true nature of a person is in this 'Atman'.
- Upanishads say; "As a caterpillar draws itself and reaches out to the next blade of grass, so the self at the end of life draws itself and reaches out to the new body"
- Reincarnations are controlled by the laws of Karma - actions bring about consequences for the person.
- Laws of Reincarnation = Bad karma = bad life, good karma = good life.

Is this still me?

- To claim the same person must have either body, memory or personality. Obviously no body, but the personality and memory may be identity.
- Memories doesn't necessarily mean everything e.g. we don't remember anything from our first yrs of our lives, but we don't deny we're the same person.
- Some claim to tell stories of past lives, but this is debated, if all links in reincarnation fail then we are forced to believe in a soul, but this is unverifiable.

Rebirth, Buddhism:

- Buddhists don't believe in a soul, teach doctrine of Anatta (soullessness)
- Believe in no God and no self. The self is based on an illusion.
- People are made up of five strands (matter, sensation, perception, acts of will and consciousness). These make a person who attracts good or bad karma.
- They believe that an energy is what is reincarnated not a self or soul. Like the flame from a lighted candle is used to light another, neither of the flames are the same but energy is passed.
- Eventually one can achieve enlightenment and be in a state free from rebirth (Nibbana)

Assess the arguments for and against the idea

Evidence for Reincarnation:

- **Ian Stevenson** provides us 20 cases as evidence.
- Took cases from India and Brazil of children who had memories of past lives and whose memories were similar to the lives of dead people who they never met.
- He chose to interview children instead of adults because he thought they were less likely to be attention-seeking and less likely to fabricate.
- Stevenson saw that the children remembered particular details that they could never have possibly known unless they actually lived there in a life before.

Evidence against Reincarnation:

- Many argue against it for religious reasons. A Muslim or Jew will disagree on the grounds that it contradicts the Quran or the Bible. They argue that people are given only one life to live which determines our salvation. Reincarnation is incompatible with Resurrection of the body.
- **John Hick**; cases of reincarnation come from countries where reincarnation is widely believed, so can we believe those cases?
- Issue of personal identity is unresolved with reincarnation. There is no reason to identify the person who is living now with someone who has died, they are not the same identity, and even sharing memories doesn't mean they are the same identity as people can share the same memory doesn't mean they are one.
- Reincarnation and karma justify the harshness of life, which is unfair.
- It doesn't answer problem of evil as claimed, it just postpones it.

Consider whether the idea of disembodied existence [life without a body] makes sense

- ⇒ People may not need bodies after death for LAD to exist. Reincarnation and resurrection involve a living body.
- ⇒ **Swinburne**; if we can imagine living in such a way then it's a coherent concept.
- ⇒ They say that we sometimes feel ourselves to be separate from our bodies and existing without them.
- ⇒ Science can't explain this because it hasn't yet developed ways to explain our inner mental lives.
- ⇒ Hence one can conclude the consciousness/mind/soul is different from the body and it may be possible this can live on without a body.

Criticisms of Disembodied existence:

- ⇒ **Brian Davies**: just because we can think about such an existence doesn't mean it's possible. We can think of all sorts of things like being invisible. Just imagining this doesn't say it's possible.
- ⇒ He argues, those things that make us persons are linked with having bodies. Disembodied survival is impossible.

H.H. Price's defence of disembodied existence:

- Price compares disembodied existence to dreaming. In dreams we live in a world which is made up of mental images. They feel real and we see and hear things, we only sense we have bodies.
- In this dream world there is no sense of time and space, you may be at one place one minute and in another next minute.
- The afterlife might be like we're dreaming, it might be made up of mental images and we wouldn't have bodies to see these images it would still look real.
- The personal identity continues in the memories and mental images a person sees.
- The afterlife would be made up of things that the person saw in this world.

Criticisms of Price:

- Against traditional theistic views. The idea of mental worlds created by people contradicts bodily resurrection by God. If afterlife was meant to be as Price suggested then God would've said so in the Revelation.
- Religious believers may also say if it is only the individual's memories that survive and it is the individual who makes them, then where is the place for God or ultimate reality?
- The afterlife is meant to be a place where we see perfection and real justice free of delusions. But Price's view makes the afterlife an illusory world.

Evidences for disembodied existence; use 'arguments for and against LAD'.

Case study evidence: Chaffin case, a farmer who died in 1921 appeared in a dream on one of his sons 4yrs after death to reveal the location of a missing will. This was validated by a court and was found there.

Arguments for and against LAD

Evidence For:

Immanuel Kant:

- ❖ LAD is necessary because the highest good (*Summum Bonum*) is realised in the afterlife. It is a state where goodness is rewarded with happiness. LAD is the ideal something we all look towards. Justice is fully achieved in LAD.

Near Death Experiences (NDE):

- ❖ People who were close to death but revived. **Dr Raymond Moody** realised there was some key characteristics they all described, so must be more than coincidence. These include;
 - ✓ A feeling of floating above the body
 - ✓ Being able to observe what is happening around them
 - ✓ Unrestricted movement, being able to pass through walls
 - ✓ Tunnel of light
 - ✓ Feeling of peace and love

- ✓ Can judge themselves objectively
- ✓ And finally told they aren't ready to die and to return.
- Criticism by **A.J. Ayer**; NDE's are meaningless as you can't verify them by experience.

Regression to past lives under hypnosis:

- ❖ If people have earlier lives then there may be some memories of past lives in the subconscious.
- ❖ There are children who remember former lives (Stevenson cases)
- ❖ Some regressed to past lives through hypnosis, these memories found to be accurate.
- However the person may be recalling memories from childhood and saying it's a past life.
- There could be a cultural gene that is passed down from generations.
- Some may be a result of psychological problems

Sightings of Dead People:

- ❖ **Dr Deepak Chopra**: bodies made up of energy, when a person dies the energy field may be retained and it appears as a ghost.
- ❖ Some argue ghosts are manifestations of dead people.

Spiritualism/ESP/Mediums:

- ❖ Communication through mediums with dead people shows evidence for LAD. The mediums attain information which was previously unknown.

Evidence Against:

Neuroscience:

- Much of what we used to attribute to the soul can now be explained by neuroscience and located within the physical brain.

Hume:

- Because the mind is so fragile, it is likely to get destroyed due to death rather than live on.

Embodied problem:

- Hard to establish how we can be sure that a person in the next life is the same person as the embodied person who died.

Freud:

- Belief in LAD says more about our psychology i.e. our own wishful thinking than it does about reality.

Meaninglessness:

- "I will survive my own death" doesn't make sense.

Compare the theories of resurrection and reincarnation and how they deal with the problem of evil.

Resurrection and the problem of evil:

- ❖ The idea of heaven and hell fits with Resurrection.
- ❖ The Summum Bonum [Kant] is achieved in the afterlife, where the greatest good is realised, such a standard cannot be found in this life, hence afterlife is necessary.
- ❖ Both Augustine and Irenaeus theodicies rely heavily on free will and an afterlife. Their theodicies end with people going to final abodes, this is essential to the theodicies if justice is to be achieved.
- ❖ Both theodicies rely on God being the judge as the basis of moral responsibility.

- ❖ But does a belief in afterlife help explain the evil events in this life. Kant's answer is that the greatest good achieved in afterlife. The theodicies say that what we do makes us go to either heaven or hell.

Augustine's theodicy:

- Death = because of original sin, as a result we all deserve to suffer for this.
- But God redeems the believer through Christ. However, not all are saved and they spend eternity in hell burning.
- Many find the idea of Hell immoral. Can God be morally justified in allowing an infinite punishment for a finite amount of sin?
- Augustine also criticised for belief that God chooses some to be saved and damns others. Seems unjust and contradicts human free will.

Irenaeus' theodicy:

- We were created imperfect, like an innocent child who commits mistakes unknowingly.
- The suffering allows us to grow, this allows us to get ultimate happiness.
- Used by modern thinkers to explain point of evil; John Hick - 'soul-making' universalist i.e. that there is no hell heaven open to all, it is not demonstrative of God's goodness to eternally punish people.
- Swinburne; we need a limited life followed by death to be able to grow and work for goodness, because if we unlimited freedom and chances we wouldn't be bothered to do good. This freedom to do what we want in a limited life must involve the consequence of damning ourselves.
- D.Z. Phillips rejects soul making theodicies as they involves some use of evil by God. cant be right for a good God to allow suffering for a greater good. Heaven may be a compensation but it doesn't pay for the immorality done on earth.

Reincarnation and the problem of evil;

- ❖ The inequalities and poverty in life which affects whether we have a good life is explained by reincarnation.
- ❖ It suggests our situation is a result of the law of Karma. Our previous life actions led to where we are today. Problem of evil seems to be solved.
- ❖ Difficulties; reincarnation actually isn't a solution but a delaying of it. If our lives are based on what evil/good we did last time then the question arises how do we explain what we did in the first life?
- ❖ The idea of being rewarded and punished in Vedantic Hinduism and Buddhism doesn't make sense because they agree that idea of 'self' is an illusion [Maya]. So if there's no self then it seems odd that people are rewarded and punished. Since there wouldn't have been a 'self' to do good or bad.