

# Year 12 Revision



- Arguments for the existence of God
- Design
  - Cosmological contingency and necessity
  - Ontological

# Arguments for the existence of God...

**Design-** William Paley and David Hume

**Cosmological (contingency and  
necessity)-** Aquinas, David Hume and  
Bertrand Russell)

**Ontological-** Anselm, Guanilo and Kant

# For each you need to know...

- Basis of the these arguments in observation and thought
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Status as proofs
- Value of the argument for religious faith
- Relationship between faith and reason

# Arguments for the existence of God

## A posteriori

- Based on evidence in the world gained through senses
- Leads to highly probable conclusion
- Example- design argument complexity of the human eye
- Strength- common experience
- Weakness- only probable conclusion

## A priori

- Uses reason and rationality
- Leads to a logically necessary conclusion- if accept premises must accept the conclusion
- Example ontological argument
- Strength- leads to a logically necessary conclusion
- Weakness- must accept the premises as fixed

# The Design Argument

- **A posteriori**- based on observations of the world- the evidence of **order and purpose** in the world cannot be by chance therefore must be the result of an **intelligent designer**
- **Inductive**- uses evidence in the world

*'This proof deserves to be treated with respect, for it is the oldest, the clearest and the most accordant with the common reason of (hu) mankind'*

Immanuel Kant

# William Paley's Analogical Design Argument



- Put forward his argument in his book '*Natural Theology*' 1802. God is best understood through examining the natural world he created
- Order and purpose in the world reveals God's Omni-benevolence
- Uses analogy- 'similar effects have similar causes'- man made objects have designers so too therefore must the world

# Analogy world and watch

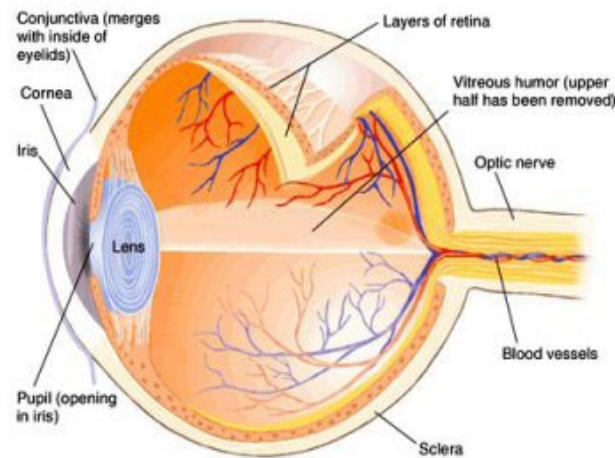


*'If we must argue from the watch to a watchmaker, we must also argue from the world to a world maker'*

Both the world and watch have order and purpose. The only difference between the watchmaker and world maker is one of scale. The world is more complex and the world maker much more intelligent.

**Design qua purpose:** everything in the world is designed for a purpose just like the watch telling the time. Paley used the example of the human eye.

**Design qua regularity:** The order of the universe suggests a designer. Paley used examples from astronomy as well as Newton's laws of motion and gravity. He argued something must be imposing order on the universe- God.





# Paley- Key Points

1. The world is a mechanical object comparable to things humans create
2. Paley is concerned with order (the way the world fits together) and purpose (the reason why there is order in the universe)
3. Paley's argument rests on an analogy- '*similar effects and similar causes*'
4. The analogy differs in scale between the watch and world and the watchmaker and world-maker.

# Relationship between faith and reason

- Paley writes his argument on the basis of his own faith- he is trying to show that **faith can be grounded in observations of the natural world** and interpretations of these observations using human reason.
- Uses science in his argument- biological understanding of the complexity of the human eye and Newton's laws of physics to stress **science, reason and rationality can provide us with evidence there is a designer God.**
- Paley writes **pre-Darwin**- given what Paley and contemporaries knew it is reasonable they conclude a designer God did exist.
- **Paley is demonstrating that reason and experience of the natural world can lead to belief in God**

# Key Critic- David Hume



- 1711-1776
- Empiricist
- Writes his criticisms in *'Dialogues concerning Natural Religion'* 23 years **before** Paley's version of the argument

# Key Critic- David Hume

- 1. Uniqueness of the universe-** Hume attacks the use of analogy- man made objects are too different- we have no experience of the origins of the universe
- 2. Diversity of casual explanation-** even if we accept the analogy we are not justified in saying because the *effects* are similar the *causes* must also be. It is a huge leap.
- 3. Principle of proportionality-** danger of anthropomorphism, weakening and diminishing God's distinct attributes
- 4. Evil and suffering-** too much evidence of poor design

## Strengths

1. Is a posteriori- we all experience order in the world
2. The science of the time backed up the argument with the eye and Newton's law of physics
3. Inductive so leads to a highly probable conclusion
4. The use of analogy is convincing

## Weaknesses

1. Kant said ultimately the argument failed- 'human reason overreaching itself and trying to understand that which it is incapable of grasping- God.'
2. Post-Darwin order in the world more easily explained by natural selection
3. Even if accept premises can reject the conclusion as it is an inductive argument
4. Analogy is weak- the universe is unique

# Value of the argument for religious believers...

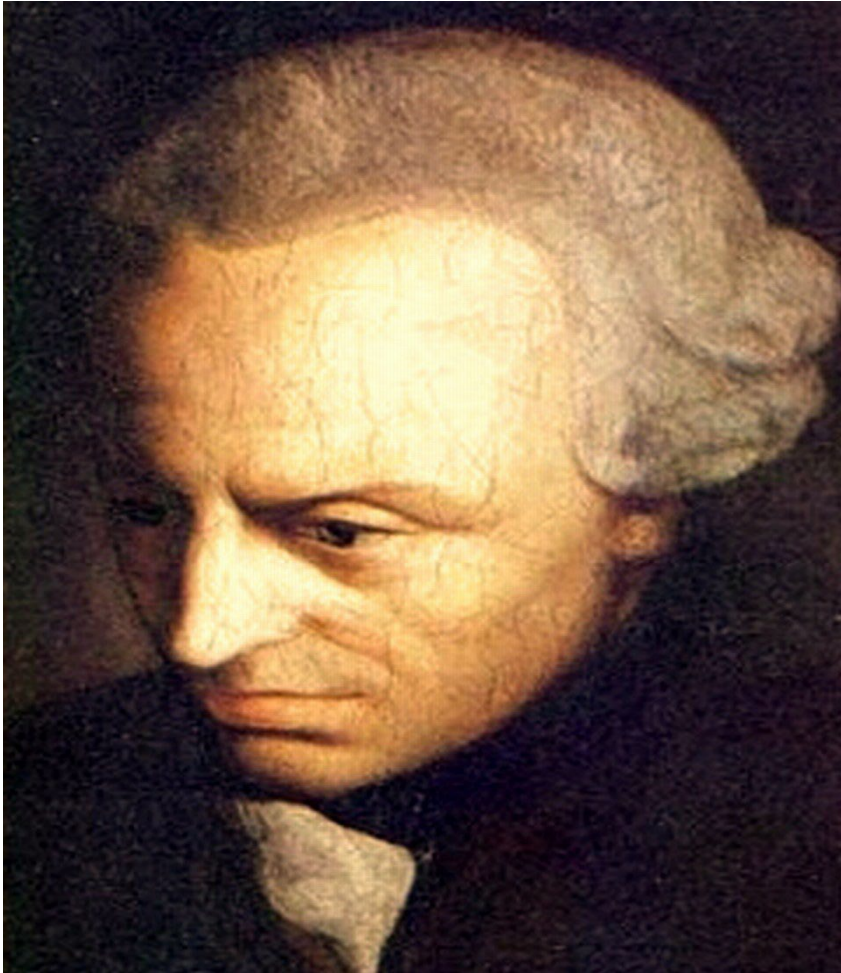
## **Value for religious believers**

- Strengthen pre-existing faith- believers add the existence of order and purpose to their own reasons
- Articulate belief in God in a way which non-believers can understand- reasonable argument as others can experience the wonder

## **Value for atheists/agnostics**

- In Paley's time this may have led people to faith in God, order and purpose must have an explanation
- However, cannot accept the conclusion that God exists without faith as we have no experience of a designer God- only a believer has pre-existing faith
- Gives the non-believer an insight into why the believer is so convinced of God

# Immanuel Kant



Believed we can never understand God through pure reason as God is beyond the physical world and we cannot experience God- the only way to know God is through practical reason- analysing our sense of morality and concluding it must be given by God.

# Status of the argument as a proof

Ultimately the argument fails to prove the existence of God as it is an inductive argument. It provides us convincing evidence but still leaves the possibility for us to reject the existence of a designer God.



# Cosmological Argument

## Aquinas' Third Way Contingency and Necessity



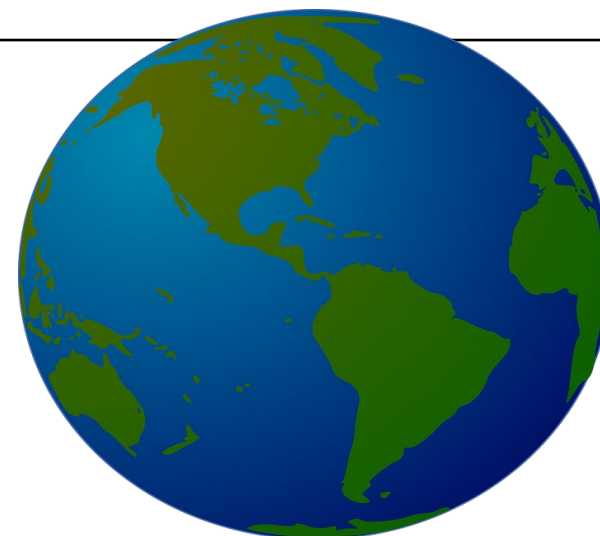
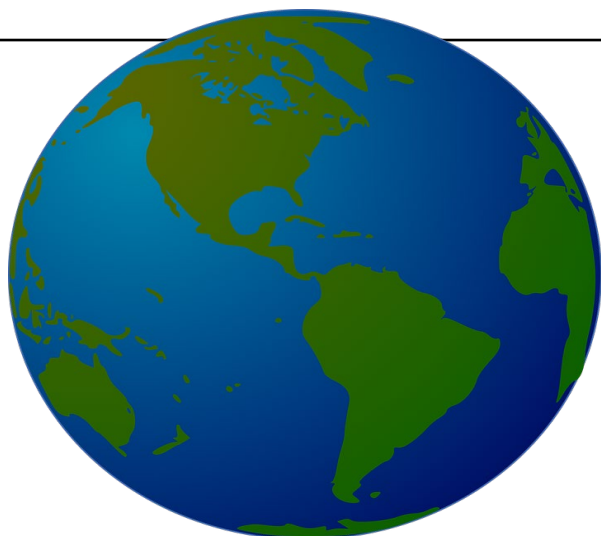
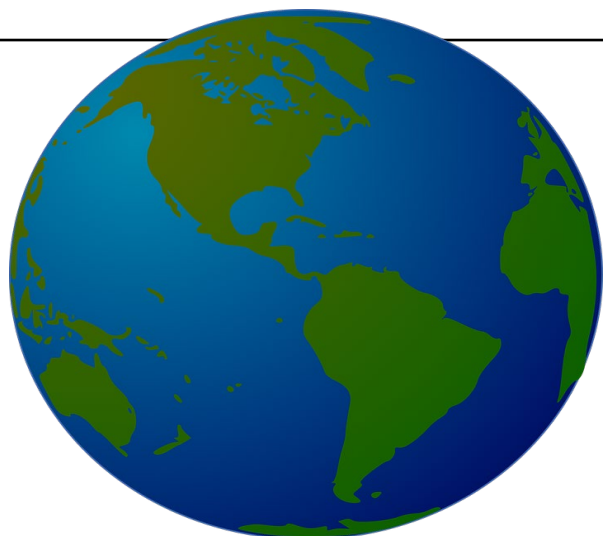
- Aquinas was a scholastic theologian who sought to **combine faith and reason** to allow understanding of God (albeit an imperfect understanding as God is too great for us to full understand).
- Hugely influential Christian thinker
- Wrote Five Ways to understand God in his work *Summa Theologica*. The first three ways are the Cosmological argument

# The Third Way- Contingency and Necessity

- The third way is a p/deductive
  1. All things that exist are dependent on something else for their existence and will one day cease to exist (contingent)
  2. Our observation and experience of the existence of creatures allows us to determine therefore that they exist contingently not necessarily
  3. Everything we observe in the world therefore has contingent existence
  4. *Therefore 'there must exist a necessary being which is infinite and contingent upon nothing for it's existence- God'*

If the world was **infinite**- every creature on earth is contingent and thus can either exist or not exist- in an infinite amount of time there would be a point when nothing contingent existed- nothing would then exist now as nothing (contingent) can bring themselves into existence, therefore there must be a necessary existence, God.

If the world was **finite** there was a time when nothing existed. As nothing can cause itself to exist they must accept there is a necessary being outside of the universe which brought the universe and it's creatures into existence.



# Frederick Copleston



- Was a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Jesuit priest and philosopher who built on Aquinas' idea of contingency and necessity
- Adding up contingent existences to infinity leaves us with contingent existence and no explanation for this existence. There must be a necessary existence to whom these contingent existences depend on who has always existed-God.
- Copleston states two types of cause:  
**Cause in fieri**- cause brings a thing into being starting its existence then is no longer involved  
**Cause in esse**- not only begins our existence but sustains it

# Relationship between faith and reason

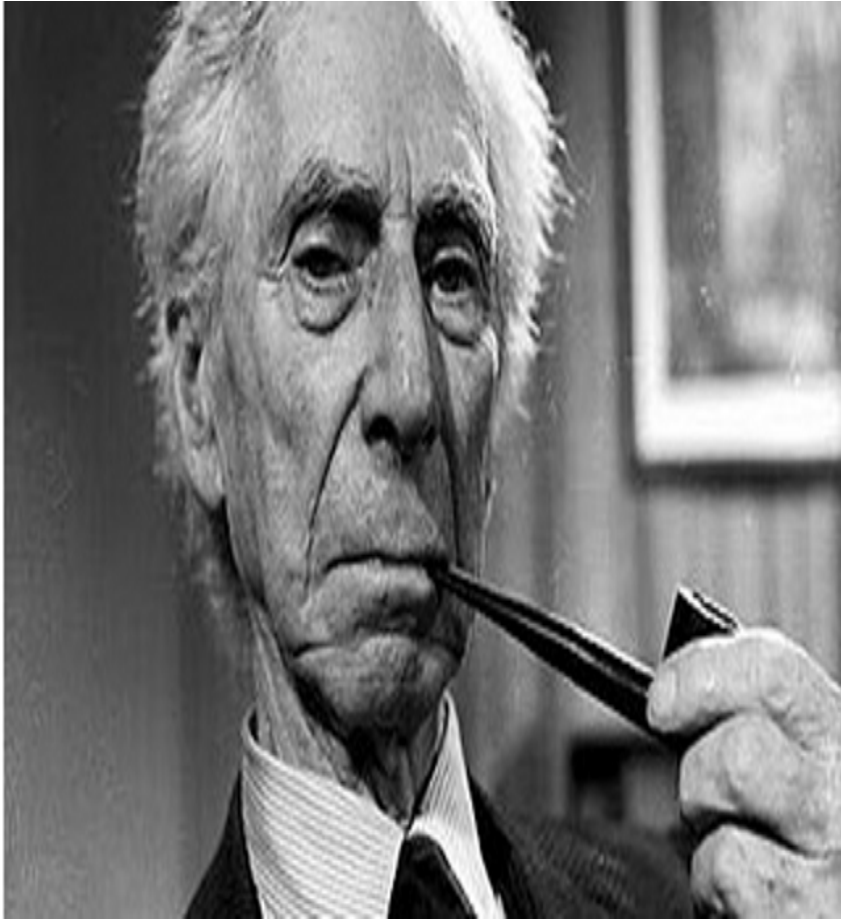
- **A priori**- the logic and reasoning of the argument should bring all people to faith in God.
- However, Aquinas' reason **must be accompanied by faith**- Aquinas says only believers fully understand what a necessary being is therefore the argument is inaccessible to those without faith. However, it does allow believers a way of explaining their faith that appeals to logic and reasoning.
- **David Hume** believed we cannot know there are connections between things a priori- in order to link cause and effect we **must have experience**- we have no experience of necessary beings or contingent beings before us therefore we cannot make any claims about this. All we know is what we experience therefore any a priori argument is flawed.
- Could be argued Aquinas' argument is in fact inductive as it reaches a probable conclusion- despite the premises a huge inductive **leap of faith** is needed to accept God existing as a necessary being.

# Criticisms of the Third Way



David Hume believes we incorrectly assume there is a necessary connection between cause and effect. The whole cosmological falls down as we cannot reason that there was a chain of contingent existence and cannot assume that there was ever a time when nothing existed as we have no experience that is the case. The concept of a necessary being is only a concept as we cannot experience this being. The argument therefore Hume said is inductive not deductive

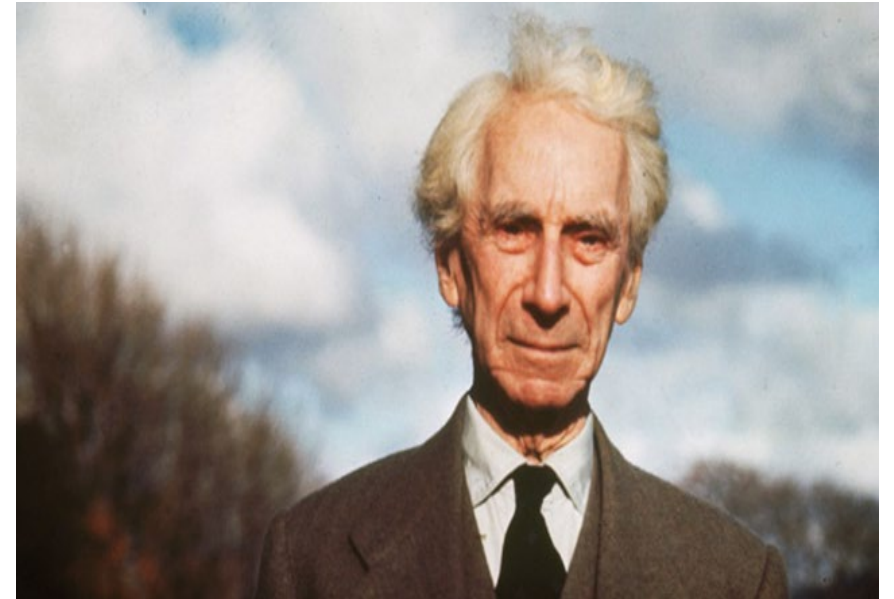
# Criticisms- Bertrand Russell



- Russell took part in a 1948 debate with Copleston on the issue of contingency. Russell stated just because things within the universe have a cause doesn't mean the universe itself has a cause- this he called the '**fallacy of composition**'. This is where we wrongly assume the whole universe has the same qualities as its parts- because things within the universe are contingent so too must the universe have contingent existence. Russell said the universe itself does not require an explanation as it is a **brute fact** (fact that does not require an explanation).

## Criticisms- Bertrand Russell cont...

- Russell claimed we cannot know what happens outside of the universe as we have no experience of it and therefore cannot make claims about God- we cannot understand a necessary being as we have no experience of one!
- We cannot argue for God's existence with an 'a priori' argument. The statement 'God exists' could easily not be true therefore not a logical necessity.





# Strengths of the Third Way

- The argument appeals to **common sense**- nothing can come from nothing therefore there must be a being outside the universe with a different kind of existence to contingent beings.
- The **Big Bang Theory supports** this- there was a time when there was nothing- nothing can come from nothing, science therefore supports the idea of a necessary being.
- **Copleston** states that a chain of contingency does not provide an explanation why there is existence in the world. It is reasonable to postulate another type of cause.
- **William Lane Craig** reformulated the Kalam form of the Causation argument. He put forward the successive addition argument. The universe cannot be infinite as it is impossible to add to an infinite number and we are adding to the universe now as we live in the present. This means the universe had a beginning therefore there must be a necessary being to bring this into existence.

# Weaknesses of the Third Way

- Even if we accept there is 'something' which began contingent existences we need **faith to conclude it is God**.
- The presence of evil and suffering in the world could lead us to the conclusion that if there is a **necessary existence it is evil**.
- Dawkins claims the argument is using 'God of the gaps'- pushing God into the gaps left by science- eventually science will understand more of the Big Bang and will reveal Russell and his **brute fact** is right.
- Bertrand Russell **fallacy of composition** and brute fact. We cannot experience a necessary existence so it is meaningless to talk about one.
- William Lane Craig and Anthony Flew met on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Copleston and Russell's radio debate. Flew concluded it is meaningless to talk about things we cannot experience.

# Value for faith

- **Atheists** Hume argued the argument was inductive not deductive and required a leap of faith away from logic to say there exists outside of the world a being whose type of existence we have never experienced. **Unable to convince.**
- **Agnostics** the argument appeals to common sense. Many find it difficult to believe our experience 'just is'- the idea our existence must depend on something is convincing, however due to evil and suffering this argument is unlikely to work on it's own.
- **Theists** the argument is available, logical way to explain why they believe- it strengthens their faith to see why they are right to believe. Copleston's cause *in esse* could deepen their understanding of the deity.

## Status of the argument as a proof

The argument is convincing in terms of something existing beyond the universe- faith is needed however to conclude that something is God.

# Ontological Argument



- Put forward in 1078 in St Anselm's *Proslogion*
- It is an **a priori** argument-basis is in thought, logic and reasoning
- Anselm is a scholastic theologian who believes you can **combine faith and reason** to come to some understanding of God
- Comes to an understanding of God a priori through examining an agreed **definition of God**
- **Deductive** as it leads to a logically necessary conclusion

Anselm's argument is as follows:

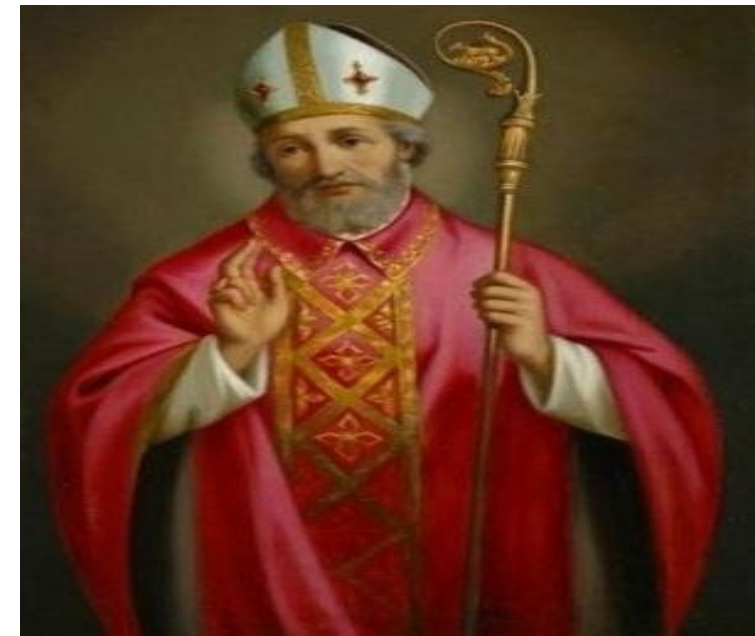
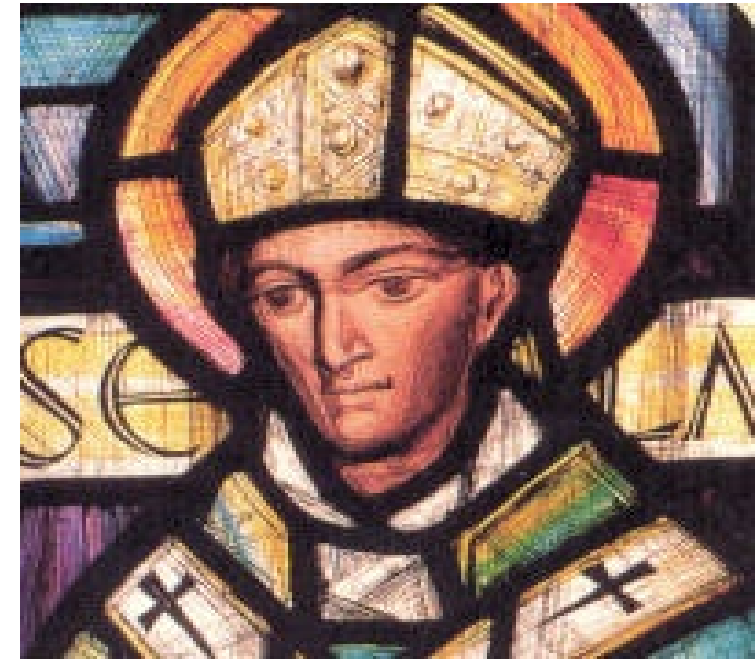
**Premise one:** Even atheists (fools) define God as 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived.'

**Premise two:** In order to be the Greatest Conceivable Being (GCB) a being must exist in reality (in re) as well as in the imagination (in intellectu) for things which exist in reality are greater than things which exist only in our mind

**Conclusion:** therefore God exists

Existence is therefore contained within the definition of the word God. This means that 'God exists' must be an **analytic proposition** (one in which the predicate 'existence' is contained within the subject 'God' (similar to how the predicate 'three sides' is contained within the subject 'triangle')).

Anselm uses '**reduction ad absurdum**' to show that an atheist who claims 'God does not exist' is making an absurd claim as they are contradicting the definition of God.



# Anselm: Key Quotes

*‘Without doubt then there exists both in the understanding and in reality a being greater than which nothing can be conceived.’*

*‘Hence something greater than which nothing can be conceived so truly exists that it cannot be conceived not to be’*



# Gaunilo's Criticisms



- Gaunilo is a **monk** who criticises Anselm's Ontological Argument
- He states that we **cannot move from a definition of God to a claim that God exists**. We have an understanding of many things, it doesn't mean they exist.
- Gaunilo illustrates this point with the **perfect island**. If we were told that the perfect island must exist in reality as if it did not and only existed in the mind it would not be a perfect island as there would be a more perfect island that existed in reality and mind we would conclude they are joking or a fool.
- The fact the fool dismisses God's existence shows there are **different ways of understanding God** and we don't all see God as the 'GCB'

## Anselm's reply to Gaunilo

### Second version of the ontological argument

- Anselm's second version is **much stronger** and has since been reformulated by key thinkers such as Norman Malcolm
- He argues that God as a GCB must have the greatest kind of existence- to have no beginning or end to your existence and to be dependent upon nothing for your existence is the greatest kind of existence- this is a **necessary existence**.
- His argument is

**Premise one:** Nothing greater than God can be conceived

**Premise two:** to be thought not to exist would be inferior to thinking of something that must always exist

**Conclusion:** God must, therefore, necessarily exist

- Gaunilo's criticism cannot apply to this version- God has necessary existence whereas the island's existence is contingent

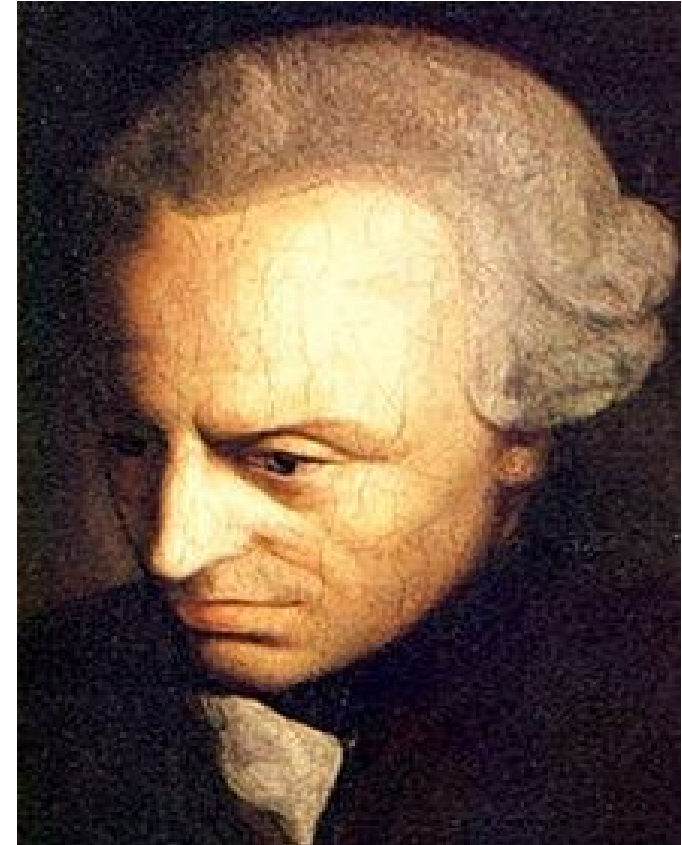
# Key critic Kant

- 1. Cannot derive existential claims from a definition.** We have an a priori idea of God as a 'supremely perfect being', therefore if God exists he will have perfect qualities one of which will be existence. However the fact we have an a priori idea of God doesn't mean that he actually exists.
- 2. Existence is not a predicate** (characteristic) as it does not add anything to our idea of something (example of the 100 pound coins). We cannot view existence as quality of God in the same way we would with 'power' or 'knowledge'. Therefore the statement God exists is not an analytic proposition and is instead a **synthetic proposition**.

# Is Kant successful in undermining Anselm?

Norman Malcolm argues that Kant successfully points out the flaws of his first argument but his second argument withstands the criticisms because of Anselm's distinction between necessary and contingent.

1. Anselm's second argument rejects Kant's criticism that God will only have the qualities we ascribe to him if he exists because his non-existence is impossible- he has necessary existence.
2. Kant's claim existence isn't a predicate is also rejected by Anselm's second argument where he argues that God's non-existence is a logical impossibility. This is something we can infer a priori and thus no empirical evidence is needed.



# The relationship between faith and reason

- Anselm is a scholastic theologian who attempted to combine faith and reason in order to reach an understanding of God.
- Anselm said all can come to know God through looking within themselves using reason and rationality.
- Purpose of ontological argument is to find a proof that on its own can show that God exists as a necessary being.
- Anselm wanted to use reason to deepen his understanding of God who he had utmost faith *'I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe in order that I may understand'*.
- Anselm realised that a non-believer does not truly understand what 'God' means, only believers understand the word 'God' involves the idea of necessary existence.

## Strengths

- It is a **deductive** argument therefore has a logically necessary conclusion- everyone should be convinced.
- Anselm's **second argument** protects the argument from the criticisms of Gaunilo and Kant.
- A posteriori arguments do not tell us **what God is like**- the ontological argument leads us to belief in a perfect God, the God of classical theism.
- **Descartes**- how do imperfect beings have an a priori concept of God in their minds? God must have given us the idea we have of him as supremely perfect being.

## Weaknesses

- Atheists will not be convinced as they *know* what God means however they **do not understand** what the word God and necessary existence means and therefore won't be convinced.
- Aquinas- only way to argue for God is through a posteriori arguments. God '**transcends our mind**', we cannot know that our definition of God is correct therefore all a priori arguments must be rejected.
- Evil and suffering- Mackie **inconsistent triad** we know evil exists, God is omnipotent and God is omnibenevolent cannot be true at the same time.

# Value for faith

**Theists** strengthen a believer's faith by giving them cause to reflect upon the supreme perfection of God as 'GCB'. Also gives them a method of explaining their faith to others in a rational way.

**Non-believers** in theory the argument should convince a non-believer- however even if it fails to convince an atheist it still provides value as it allows them to understand the faith of others.



# Status of the argument as a proof

In theory the argument is deductive and should lead everyone to belief in God, however the complexity of the argument highlighted by Dawkins, and the impossibility for a non-believer to fully understand the concept of 'God' and 'necessary existence' makes this very difficult.

Anselm himself recognised this as a problem- faith is needed to grasp his argument therefore it is a circular one- you need faith to access the argument to lead to faith.



- a) Explain the differing approaches taken by the ontological and cosmological arguments in proving God exists (15)
- b) 'Philosophical arguments for religious faith have no value for religious faith'  
Assess this view (15)

# Evil and Suffering

- Natural and moral evil (examples and the unique problems of each)
- The logical/a priori problem of evil (inconsistent triad Mackie) and the a posteriori evidential problem (William Rowe)
- General responses to evil and suffering e.g. Augustine's theodicy
- John Hick 'vale of soul making' theodicy **with** evaluation
- The free will defence **with** evaluation
- Process theology (Griffin) **with** evaluation

# The Problem of Evil and Suffering

Many people find it hard to reconcile evil and suffering with the belief in the God of classical theism (omnipotent and omnibenevolent). There are two types of evil and suffering in the world and both pose their own individual problems:

**Moral evil:** evil and suffering caused by the free actions of humans e.g. holocaust/terrorist acts. The problem is why would an all-powerful and all-loving God create beings capable of such evil. Should God of not made us good or at least limit the harm we can do?

**Natural evil:** evil that happens in the world which is not the direct responsibility of human beings e.g. earthquakes/famine. For some natural evil is the most challenging as this is suffering beyond human control- this questions the power and love of God as a Creator.

# Natural and Moral Evil

1. What is the type of evil?
2. Include as many examples as you can
3. What are the specific problems raised by this type of evil and suffering?

# The Problem of Evil and Suffering

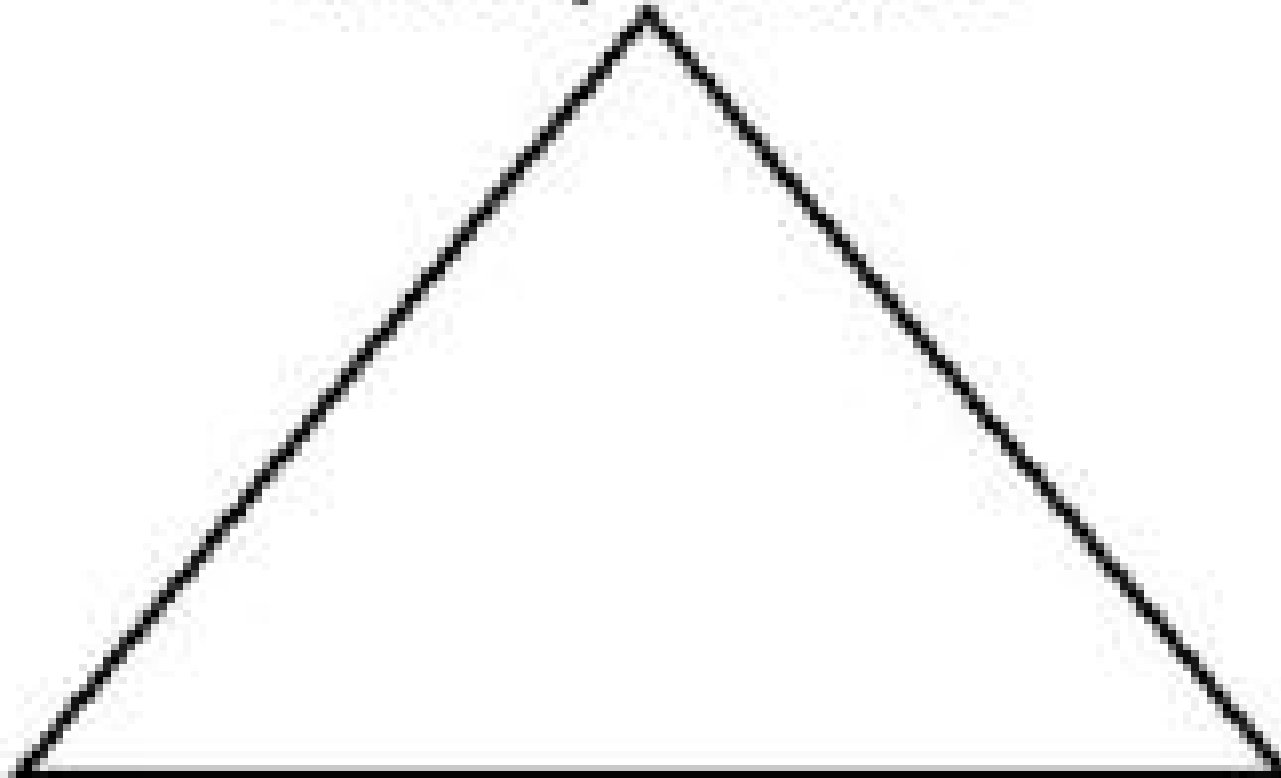
## 1. Logical Problem Inconsistent Triad

- This is an **a priori/deductive argument**- questions the existence/characteristics of God with the existence of evil in the world
- **Logic tells us that three things cannot be true** at the same time- evil exists, God is all powerful and God is all loving. If God is omnipotent God has the power to stop it, if God is omnibenevolent God wants to stop it, yet evil and suffering still exists
- **Mackie** argues that evil, God's omnipotence and God's Omnibenevolence form an **inconsistent triad** as they cannot all be true at the same time therefore the existence of God is logically impossible.

*'Either God cannot abolish evil, or he will not; if he cannot then is he not all-powerful; if he will not then he is not good'*

**St Augustine**

**Omnipotence**



**Omnibenevolence**

**Excessive evil**

# The Problem of Evil and Suffering

## 2. Evidential Problem of Evil

- This is an a **posteriori**, inductive argument
- **William Rowe** argues that if evil and suffering in the world brought about a greater good, God must be justified in allowing it to happen- however no good seems to come from evil at all
- This plus the **intensity duration** and **distribution** of evil means it is extremely unlikely God exists



# Responses to Evil and Suffering

Three potential responses:

- 1) **Evil is not a substance** therefore God isn't responsible
- 2) There is a purpose for evil and suffering that brings about a **greater good**
- 3) Either God's omnipotence is **limited** (process theologians) or God's Omnibenevolence is limited (deism- the belief that an all-powerful God made the world and it now exists independently from him)





# Evil is not a substance

- **St Augustine** put forward the argument that evil is not a thing but a **privation of good** like blindness is the absence of sight
- God made the world perfect but it 'malfunctioned' due to the angelic and human **abuse of freewill** in the 'fall'
- **Adam and Eve** were tempted by the serpent to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree- God became angry with them and evicted them from the garden and they 'fell' from grace
- This allowed the world to become **distanced from God** and natural and moral evil therefore flourished
- **David Hume** argues there is too much evil to argue evil isn't a 'thing'
- **William Rowe** argues the scale of evil (intensity, duration and distribution) means we cannot simply say it is a privation of good

# John Hick 'Vale of Soul Making'

- Evil has a **purpose** and God chose to put it in the world for a **greater good**
- Draws heavily on the theodicy of **St Irenaeus** who argued that although we are created in the 'image of God' (gen 1:26) we have to develop into a the likeness of God through making the right moral choices
- Hick argued God deliberately **created us imperfect** as goodness which we freely choose for ourselves in difficult situations is 'limitlessly more valuable' than a ready made goodness created by God. We are unfinished in creation and must complete the second stage of creation by making free moral choices.
- In order to allow us genuine freewill between good and evil there must be an **epistemic distance** so their choices are truly free

# John Hick 'Vale of Soul Making'

- We are not therefore fallen from perfection as Augustine says but **moving towards perfection** through the process of soul making this means **genuine freewill** between good and evil and therefore the potential for humans to cause suffering to each other. However, the suffering that results from moral evil allows further opportunity for the soul to develop
- Hick also explains **natural evil** by saying it allows us to face the challenges necessary for 'soul making'- this is necessary to complete the second phase of creation. Natural evil would also mean the laws of nature would need to be flexible rather than fixed e.g. gravity would have to work in a different way every time someone fell- this would be dreamlike and we wouldn't develop any characteristics such as compassion

*'Consequently, such a world, however well it might promote pleasure would be very ill adapted for the development of the moral qualities of human personality'*

## John Hick 'Vale of Soul Making'

- **Sometimes good doesn't come out of evil** and instead leads to fear and resentment *'Therefore, it would seem that any divine purpose of soul making that is at work in earthly history must continue beyond this life if it is ever to more than a partial and fragmentary success'* (Hick)
- The only way to justify the 'toil and sorrow of human life' is if we **experience a future which is so wonderful** as to be beyond our imagination
- God can only be defended against the problem of evil and suffering if **ALL reach heaven** in the end

# John Hick 'Vale of Soul Making'

## Strengths

1. The emphasis on human freewill is very appealing- the idea that our lives aren't free is abhorrent to us (seen in films such as *The Matrix* and *The Hunger Games*)
2. A positive theodicy compared to Augustine and fits in with science (everything wasn't perfect at the beginning!)
3. More realistic in that God accepts some responsibility
4. Accords with popular ideas such as 'whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger' (an idea from Nietzsche)

## Weaknesses

1. Never justifiable to hurt someone in order to help them. There are some things so terrible it is never worth while e.g. holocaust. Dostoyevsky uses his characters in his book *The Brothers Karamazov* to highlight that nothing can ever be worth the suffering of innocent children
2. Does suffering need to be so bad? Surely our souls could develop with small amounts of suffering?
3. Unlike Augustine the theodicy doesn't fit in with biblical teaching about the world being made perfect at the beginning or atonement through following Jesus

# The Freewill Defence

- Freewill is an intrinsic part of what it is to be a human being- it is so valuable that God would never do anything to put it at risk- if God were to step into the world to prevent evil and suffering he would reveal his presence and then we would be good and love him not through genuine free choice but because we want to enter heaven.
- If we are truly free then there must be the real possibility of evil and suffering and our actions must have real consequences. We can learn from these and develop to be good people or we can ignore the suffering we cause- we will be judged accordingly
- Richard Swinburne writes that although God is omnipotent he can only do what is logically possible- this means God cannot give us freewill and make us choose good. As God is omnibenevolent though we are assured that evil must only be permitted because it brings a greater good.
- God wants humans to choose freely to love him. God knows that we may use our free will to make bad decisions and this is why he has given us limited power and limited freedom- God would not risk us becoming too evil

# The Freewill Defence

- Natural evil must occur so that we can make significant moral choices- as creator God provides us with much good in our lives, but he does have the right to require some suffering from us if that suffering will create further good. He also makes sure that the evil of the natural world has a maximum level- only the correct amount of evil needed to allow humans to exercise free will effectively is permitted
- God therefore allows moral evil to occur and by creating the natural processes that cause bad desires, diseases and accidents, also allows natural evil to occur

# The Freewill Defence

*'All the world's evils do probably serve a greater good.'*

God cannot bring about the greater good without allowing evil to take place. God must also make sure that the good outweighs the evil necessary to achieve it. Swinburne points our examples of good people allowing evil to occur in order to bring about good things e.g. the pain of the dentists chair to have healthy teeth.





# The Freewill Defence

Swinburne argued that natural evil exists because without it our ability to make free choices would be '*gravely diminished*'. He provides two explanations for this view:

- 1. The higher order defence-** natural evil allows the expression of valuable emotions such as compassion. World is a better place because we feel concern for others
- 2. Natural evil provides us with knowledge that can help future suffering-** good can come about through our knowledge of past natural evil e.g. we have observed the devastating effects of earthquakes and so know we avoid building cities on fault lines. Natural evil provides us with the choice of whether or not to spend our time investigating the causes to help others, if we had the knowledge a priori we would not have the opportunity to make a choice

# The Freewill Defence

**Why does God not step in to help the world?**

1. If we knew God existed, we would be good for the reward rather than we had used our freewill to choose good.
2. If God stepped into the world there would be no atheists and agnostics and therefore believers would not have the opportunity to use their freewill to help them see the truth of God's existence



# The Freewill Defence

## Strengths

- We would usually assume that a world with free will is better than a world of robots.
- It does seem that the only way to have true free will is to have the capacity of choosing evil.
- The 'Beneficial Laws of Nature' could explain the presence of natural evil, i.e. natural evil is an unfortunate side-effect of having laws of nature.
- Seems to explain moral evil.

## Weaknesses

- God could intervene, miracles show this to be possible (if we ignore the actual debate of the legitimacy of miracles), so why doesn't God intervene more frequently? This could undermine complete free will, but wouldn't it be more omnibenevolent?
- God could have created a world with free will but no evil, i.e. a world where evil never actualized, but would this really be free will?
- Assumes that we have free will to start with, there are also arguments for theological determinism.
- To what extent is the assumption true that a world with free will is better than a world full of robots? Perhaps it would be better to live without evil but also without free will.
- God could have given us the illusion of free will.
- Doesn't really explain natural evil, God could have created perfect laws of nature, instead of ones with faults.

# Process Theodicy (PT)

- Based on the philosophy of **A.N Whitehead** and developed into a theodicy by **David Griffin**
- Completely different to Augustine and Irenaeus- **God is not omnipotent.**
- Process Theodicy accepts Hume's view that evil is incompatible with the existence of an all powerful and all loving God, because of this many do **not** believe this is actually **a theodicy.**
- **God is not the creator** in PT- the universe is an uncreated process which includes God. God shaped the world from pre-existing primordial chaos. In disturbing the chaos, however, God opened up the possibility of both good and evil.
- The **evolution** of the universe occurs due to God's desire to **maximise harmony and intensity** this unfortunately allows for the possibility of discord and evil.
- God begins and shapes the process which results in intense suffering, however the **good** that can come out of these occasions **outweighs the evil** that has been produced in the past and will be produced in the future.

# Process Theodicy (PT)

Two important values are 'harmony' and 'intensity'. Without harmony we have the evil of discord and without intensity the evil of triviality. However, intensity brings about increased complexity, which can lead to discord and therefore evil

**Harmony** Parts of an experience must fit together and not clash in order for the experience to be enjoyable. An experience could have harmony but no intensity which would lead to triviality. For a beautiful experience we need both harmony and intensity.

**Discord** When the parts of an experience clash, it loses harmony and makes us feel imbalanced. The experience, therefore not enjoyable.

**Intensity** Experiences must be intense in order to be enjoyable and worthwhile. The more complex an experience, the more intense and enjoyable. Complexity can only occur if there is a high degree of order and harmony.

**Triviality** if experiences are not intense, they lose their meaning and become trivial. Whitehead saw God's role as maximising harmony and intensity in order to provide us enjoyable experiences.

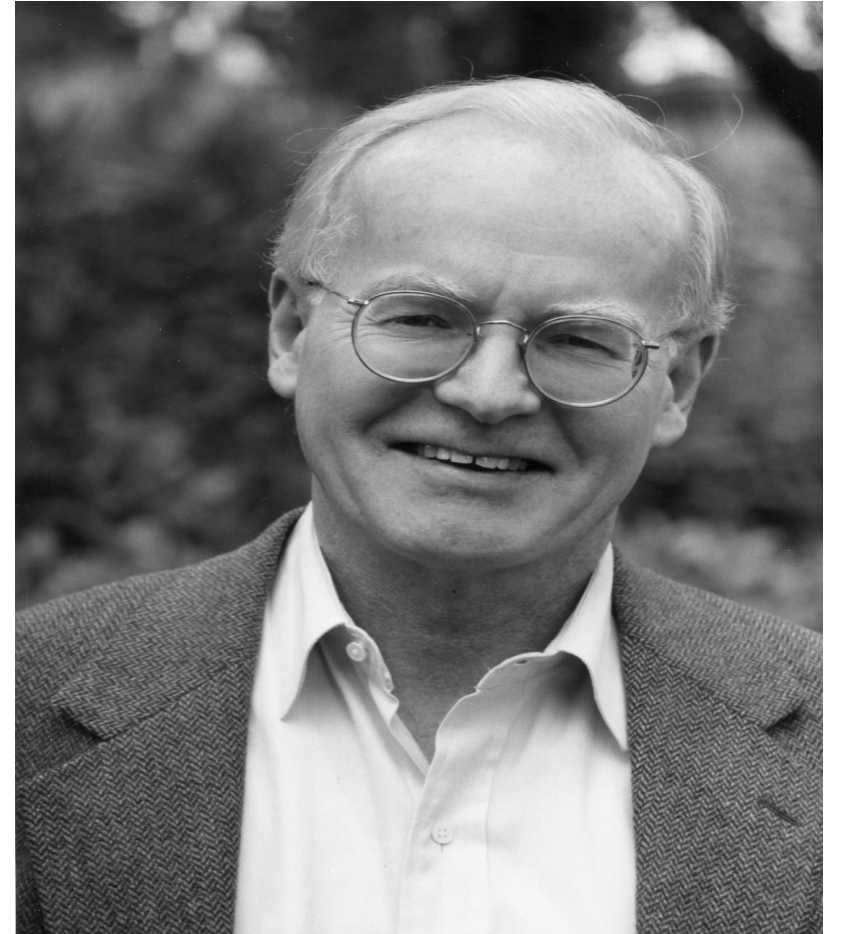
# Process Theodicy (PT)

- God takes a risk in creating the universe as he is not in control. However, he is involved in the risk too as he **experiences with us**- he shares our joy and pains. The fact that God shares our suffering with us Griffin argues should help us accept that evil is outweighed and justified by good.
- The God of process is **not in control** of the world. He is not omnipotent and is himself subject to the absolute and unchanging laws of nature. In John Hick and the Freewill Defence God persuades us to be good as he wants us to use our freewill, in process theodicy God persuades and lures us to be good because this is his only option.
- The fact that evil occurs is evidence that **God's power is limited**- God's will is often not done. God wants us to be good but has limited power and cannot force us to be good.

# Process Theodicy (PT)

## Why is this theodicy so appealing?

1. It avoids the problem of evil by stating that God is not omnipotent- he is not the creator of the universe and therefore cannot be held responsible.
2. In process thought we have a God who suffers with us. He us with us in our battles against evil. This could lead to a greater understanding of God and a stronger relationship with him.



# Process Theodicy (PT)

## Strengths

- Explains why God doesn't stop evil and suffering- because he can't! God exists as part of the universe but he didn't create it, therefore he is not responsible for the suffering in the universe.
- God suffers too so he knows what we are going through when we suffer. We can have a good relationship with God.
- God suffers too and yet continues to provide us with opportunities to develop- he feels the struggle against evil is worth it and so should we.
- We do not know that good will triumph, so we must work together with God to battle against evil.

## Weaknesses

- Is not a theodicy as the 'God' portrayed is not the God of classical theism. A God who is not omnipotent may not be worthy of worship.
- If God cannot guarantee that good will triumph, then what is the point of the struggle? Evil may conquer in the end anyway- this idea can be quite depressing for some.
- Process theodicy can be seen as elitist- the good outweighs the evil isn't convincing for many. The intense suffering of the poor and oppressed is worthwhile as it leads to the opportunities for great happiness for the elite.
- Is the God of process theology wrong to create a world if he knows he cannot control it?



# Religious Experience

## Religious Experience

- Visions: corporeal, imaginative and intellectual
- Numinous experiences: Otto
- Mystical experiences: William James; non-sensuous and non-intellectual union with the divine as presented by William Stace

## Verifying religious experiences

- The challenges of verifying religious experiences
- The challenges to religious experience from science
- Religious response to those challenges
- Swinburne's principle of credulity and testimony
- The influence of religious experience and their value for religious faith

# Religious Experience- Visions

A type of religious experience in which an individual believes that they have seen or heard God. Visions can be involved in other experiences e.g. mystical

## 1. Corporeal vision

This is a vision of a figure in human form, external to the subject. For example St Bernadette's vision of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes.



# Religious Experience- Visions

## 2. Imaginary vision

This is a vision which occurs as images in the person's mind or in a dream, for example Jacob's 'dream' of a ladder or in Matthew's Gospel Joseph is warned in a dream to take Mary and Joseph to Egypt to protect them from Herod.



# Religious Experience- Visions

## 3. Intellectual vision

This is a vision which gives the subject special knowledge of a 'revelation' from God- it is extremely difficult to put into words although it affects them deeply. A person who has such a vision is able to grasp truth about God which could not be gained in other ways.

For example:

- Peter's vision (Acts 11:6-10) Peter gives an account of his vision in which he felt God was telling him there was no longer a need to follow the Jewish dietary laws.
- Julian of Norwich 14-15<sup>th</sup> century mystic

# Religious Experience- Numinous

- Otto stated that religious experiences are '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*'- mysterious experiences **which frighten** us and which we respond to with **awe**.
- **Emotional element** of religion is very important- Otto believed that part of religion involves experiences of the '**wholly other**' or the '**numinous**'. The numinous cannot be taught but must be '**awakened in the spirit**' through religious experience.
- Religious experiences are vital to religion as they are the best way to understand something of the numinous or wholly other. They give an insight into the mysteriousness of God which cannot be obtained in any other way.
- A numinous experience is evidence of the 'wholly other'. The subjects of such an experience may see a vision and feel completely overwhelmed by the presence of God and feel insignificant in this presence.

# Religious Experience- Numinous

Sometimes a numinous experience may result in a conversion for example Saul to Paul.



# Religious Experience- Numinous

For Otto, we cannot fully understand the numinous as it is 'wholly other'- it is so unlike us that we cannot comprehend it using reasons and rationality. However, through emotions and feelings produced by religious experiences, we can come to know something of the numinous. The problem with this is that this special insight into God cannot easily be put into words.

However, Otto argues we can use the words available to us to explain our experience and although this is not ideal, it could still 'awaken the spirit' and allow others to obtain a glimpse of what is 'wholly other'- God



# Religious Experience- Numinous

The '*tremendum*' component of the numinous experiences comprise three elements:

**Awfulness-** inspiring awe. Otto describe this as 'religious dread' terror at experiencing the wrath of an almighty God

**Overpoweringness-** inspires a feeling of humility

**Energy or urgency-** creating an impression of immense vigour

The '*mysterium*' component has two elements:

**Wholly other-** totally outside our normal experience

**Fascination-** causes the subject of the experience to be caught up in it



# Religious Experiences Mystical

*In Varieties of Religious Experience, William James states that ‘...personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness.’*

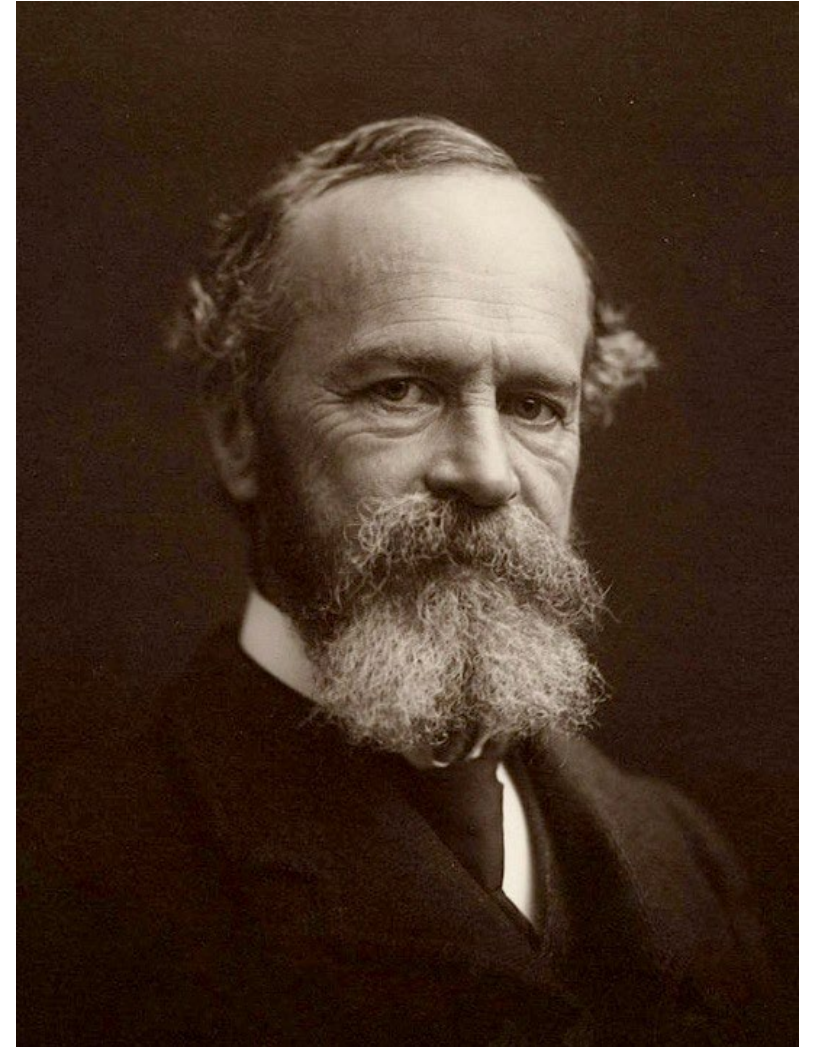
Mysticism can be defined as a direct experience of God which makes a person **feel at one** with the creator and gives them an insight into the ultimate reality.

William James said that for an experience to be a mystical experience it must meet these four criteria:

1. **Ineffability**- impossible to put into words
2. **Noetic quality**- experience gives truths which a person would be unable to obtain without the experience
3. **Transiency**- the experience is short (never more than two hours). However, he/she will remember the experience forever
4. **Passivity**- The person who has the experience feels that they are taken over by a superior power

# Religious Experiences Mystical

- James felt that religious experiences of God did happen and pointed to the positive changes people have made to their lives as a result of such changes as evidence they are real and thus veridical. He used the case study of S.H. Hadley to support this and would have used the example of Saul to Paul
- He felt that people of different backgrounds and cultures should be expected to have slightly different religious experiences- people experience mystical experiences in different ways



# Religious Experiences Mystical

**William Stace** identified two types of mystical experience:

1. **Extrovertive**- experience which involves looking at the universe and feeling a sense of unity in all things
2. **Introvertive**- this is the truest form of religious experience for it is non-sensuous (not involving sense experience) and non-intellectual (not the result of humans trying to understand God). It involves looking within oneself and realising there is a union with the Divine- a feeling we are at one with God after looking within ourselves and seeing our true nature. Stace felt that the essence of this experience is the same for all people and cultures, although they may experience it differently.

# Problems for verifying religious experiences

- The main problem for RE's is they cannot be verified by objective, empirical testing- we cannot carry out a scientific experiment to determine whether they actually did happen.
- **Logical Positivist A.J. Ayer** argued the language used to describe religious experiences is meaningless due to the fact that accounts of religious experience cannot be verified. Claims of a religious experience are interesting from a psychological point of view but dismissed any claims to religious knowledge as a result of such experience. It is impossible to move from an experience of a religious emotion to a claim that a transcendent God exists- for this is something we have no empirical evidence and therefore this claim is meaningless.

# Problems for verifying religious experiences

- Religious experiences tend to be private experiences- no empirical evidence to back them up.
- Individuals from different religions and cultures tend to experience things differently- shouldn't they all have the same experience?
- William James would argue we do have empirical data in the effects on the individual after the experience. He would also argue that different religions and cultures will inevitably experience things differently
- The fact that these experiences are ineffable complicates things even further therefore although the experience is significant for the subject of the experience, it can hold no significance for others as they cannot feel the experience themselves or understand the account of the experiences of others.

# Responses to the challenge of verification

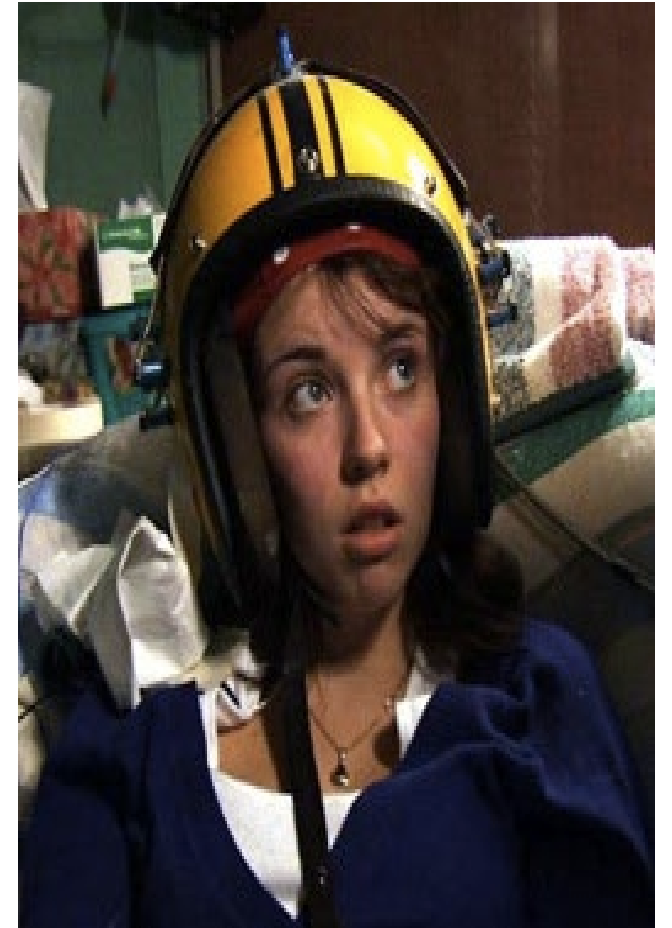
- Obvious that a RE cannot be empirically verified- they are occasions when God has chosen to reveal himself to an individual or small group which allows him to provide humanity with a message without revealing his existence
- May fail to convince sceptics but they are meaningful for those who have the experience and accounts of RE may 'awaken the spirit' in others
- James would argue that RE can be verified as we can observe the positive changes in others
- James would argue that the fact that different religions and cultures have slightly different experiences is to be expected- people will interpret experiences in a way that makes sense to them
- Otto would agree with the limitations of human language in trying to put experience of the 'wholly other' into words- we can only use the words we have available to us and this may 'awaken the spirit' in others

# Challenges to RE from science

- Scientists seek to find alternative explanations for Religious Experiences. They employ **Ockham's Razor** (the simplest explanation is the best explanation) by arguing that it is much more likely that there are psychological/physiological explanations for religious experiences other than God.
- **Ramachandran temporal lobe epilepsy** sufferers are more prone to religious and mystical belief and suggested that figures such as St Paul who claimed to have had a religious experience could have suffered from the condition. However, Ramachandran doesn't think that his work shows that religious experiences do not happen, just that people with temporal lobe epilepsy are more susceptible to such experiences

# Challenges to RE from science

- **Michael Persinger's God Helmet-** Persinger created a helmet which passes electromagnetic energy to subject's temporal lobes. Those who have worn the helmet have reported feeling a presence with them, feeling peaceful and at one with the world- sensations which are reported by those who have religious experiences. Persinger conducted the experiment on a Buddhist monk and a Christian nun and they both had an experience which gave them a similar feeling to experiences felt during meditation. Persinger believes that this proves that religious experiences are not genuine experiences of God, they are caused by temporal lobe epilepsy.





# Challenges to RE from science

- **Physiological explanation** A test carried out on theology students in 1966 during a Good Friday meditation found that drugs significantly increase the chance of a religious experience. Half were given a drug and half a placebo. There were far more reported religious experiences from the students who had taken drugs.
- **Psychological explanations** Freud argued that religious experiences are reactions to a hostile world- humans feel helpless because they cannot control things and so seek a father figure who will protect them. As God is not real, he cannot be experienced and, therefore religious experiences are illusions. For example Freud said that if someone has a mystical experience of being on the cross with Christ, it is a projection about their beliefs about suffering and salvation and their desire to be reunited with their parents.
- Other psychologists have put religious experiences down to mental illness, sexual frustrations, adolescence and guilt

# Responses to the challenges to RE from science

- Swinburne argued it is not up to the believer to prove that an experience has taken place, but up to the sceptic to prove that it hasn't
- Swinburne argued that **some** experiences may be explained by drug use, mental health issues etc. but that doesn't mean all experiences are invalid. Even if only one experience is shown to be genuine, this is proof that God exists
- It may be argued that God finds it easier to communicate with humans who have temporal lobe epilepsy- James argues 'faulty minds' might be easier to communicate with.

# Richard Swinburne's argument

- He develops an argument for the existence of God based on religious experience
- Swinburne defines religious experience as “an experience of God or of some other supernatural thing”
- This is a very important definition, as many people have rejected the testimony of religious experiences on the basis that they have not actually featured ‘God’, but an angel, a messenger or other religious figure (e.g. Virgin Mary).
- After defining religious experience, Swinburne's argument effectively takes the form of two areas: the principle of credulity and, the principle of testimony.

# Principle of Credulity

- The basic principle states “If it seems to a subject that X is present, then probably X is present; what one seems to perceive probably is so” Therefore, we should accept what a person experiences unless you can prove otherwise. •
- Swinburne offers the four possible challenges in his argument.
  1. The circumstances in which the experience occurred generally produce unreliable results (e.g. intoxication from drugs or alcohol), or the recipient of the experience is unreliable (e.g. a notorious pathological liar).
  2. The recipient of the experience did not have the ability to interpret the experience (e.g. if the recipient is very young or has some sort of barrier to general understanding)
  3. It is possible to show that whatever/whoever the recipient is claiming to have experienced was not there.
  4. It is possible to show that whatever/whoever the recipient is claiming to have experienced was there, but was not involved in /responsible for the

# Principle of Testimony

- Swinburne appeals to a basic rational and verifiable idea - that people usually tell the truth.
- Again he accepts that there will be 'special considerations' which may reject this principle i.e. the existence of positive grounds for rejecting what we are being told.
- The principle of testimony suggests that I should accept your statement of what you experienced unless I can demonstrate positive grounds showing it to be mistaken.

# Influence of RE and their value for religious faith

- Religious experiences have been influential as the RE's of individuals have been responsible for the origins of many religious traditions e.g. Muhammad's revelation from the Angel Jibril
- For an individual who has a religious experience such an experience is significant as it may lead them to faith in God or strengthen their pre-existing faith by giving them a deeper understanding of God
- However, do religious experiences really have any value for those who do not have such an experience themselves? As we cannot verify such experiences how do we know that they are real? Our language is limited due to the ineffable nature of religious experience so it is unlikely we will understand them.
- There are also similarities between RE and temporal lobe epileptic seizures and they may also be the result of drugs