Support for centres with AO2: some suggestions for teaching

NB *the nature of this information is for developing AO2. What follows are NOT definitive answers – lines of argument are suggested in order to demonstrate the skills of AO2, but the WJEC strongly advises further development and for teachers and candidates to apply their own ideas and evaluation in response to the materials already provided.*

For the skills of AO2 it is important to remember that what is being assessed are skills of evaluation and not simply knowledge and understanding of content. The six bullets for each Theme are listed beneath the AO1 content. They are NOT questions in themselves but rather indications of the areas of debate that may arise in a typical AO2 question statement. In addition, as AO1 material is studied the whole purpose of AO2 is to approach an understanding of the AO1 material in a critical and evaluative way that is very much a rigorous and academic discipline.

One of the most common features of a Principal Examiner's report is the regular comment that candidates just **present lists of views** in support of and/or challenging an argument often in response to a question expecting an evaluation. So, for instance, a typical mark scheme may list bullets of points to consider but to repeat them does not demonstrate AO2. How the points are **USED** and **DEVELOPED** by the teacher and candidate to form critical analysis and evaluation is crucial and transforms any suggested material into academic debate that mirrors the AO2 Band descriptors.

There is nothing wrong with preparing your considerations and reflections of a topic in response to the 'Issues for evaluation and analysis' section of the Specification; however, what is important is **making sure that there is some form of personal analysis or commentary throughout the answer** that can then be **used to form a reasonable conclusion**.

Evaluation and analysis skills present themselves as a constant dialogue between the voice of the evidence or the views that you are selecting, and that of your own voice, with the end result of you having the final word that states clearly your position [conclusion(s)].

A level Component 2 : Philosophy of Religion (Yr 2)
Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief

Philosophy of Religion Theme 2 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The first bullet point is to consider how far religious belief can be considered a neurosis?

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Religion is completely neurotic as shown by wish-fulfilment. The human mind creates beliefs and images to satisfy our most basic longings and desires, particularly in times of stress and danger. Thus, religious belief is the way in which people are able to understand and navigate their world.

2. Religion is built upon fear and guilt; this echoes the disorders that Freud had dealt with in his practice and is reflected in his theory of totemism. Such beliefs hinder a person's mental health.

3. The goal of life is to have a stronger ego to mediate between the drives of the id and the
expectations of the superego. Religion is identified as a part of the superego, leading to fears about not 'measuring up' to unrealistic expectations.

4. Freud was biased due to his own negative experience of religion, a limited study of religion based on what he knew about Judaism and Christianity. He appears unaware of eastern traditions, particularly Buddhism as well as mysticism.

5. Religion is not a neurosis: it is an essential buffer between people and the world and useful, having a role similar to music or art. Religion is no more an illusion than science, both enable us to interpret the world. It therefore can decrease neurosis.

6. Neither the universal presence of the Oedipus/Electra Complex nor the connection between religion and these complexes have been proven. Freud's view of religion as neuroses is more speculative than it is true.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Are there powerful fears and desires in babies and young toddlers towards their parents?
2. Is 'sexual' a term that can be used to describe an infant's relationship to their parents?
3. Do people turn to religion because they are afraid of life without it, or could they turn to religion from a standpoint of courage and strength?
4. Does religion give anyone a healthy identity or does one always have to surrender a valuable part of their identity to be religious?
5. Do Freud's theories apply to those who are religious, but do not believe in a personal God (or any God at all)?
6. Can science prove that all people who are religious are somehow more mentally deficient than those who are not religious?

- Freud is right that religion is a neurosis holding back healthy development.
- Freud is wrong: religion enhances life and is a sign of human creativity and values.
- Freud successfully describes what religion can be for some people; but he does not account for mysticism and forms of religion outside of a certain type of monotheism that promotes God as a harsh and demanding father figure.

Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief

Philosophy of Religion Theme 2 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The second bullet point is to consider is the adequacy of Freud's explanation of religious belief.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Freud's theory has potential support in Darwin, who first speculated on human hordes led by an alpha male.
2. Support provided by Ludwig Feuerbach who argued that religion was a childlike condition and we project those qualities we most desire on to a figure we call 'God'. This is supported by modern psychologist John Schumaker.
3. Freud had practised for years and based his theories on analysis and research. Contemporary evidence such as that of M.P Carroll (1984) supports Freud's work. 'Religion is born from man's need to make his helplessness tolerable.' – Freud.
4. Darwin's words on the primal horde was speculative. There is evidence of a greater variety within the structure of primitive societies, e.g. Bronislaw Malinowski's example of the people of the Trobriand Islands: these have a matrilineal family structure rather than the masculine domination suggested by Darwin.
5. Freud uses only five case studies in support of his work: an insufficiently rigorous study for a valid scientific approach.
6. Freud's assumption about God from the Oedipus Complex, Totem and Taboo and other themes is that God is male for religious believers. This ignores those religions which had a female god or no God at all. Theravada Buddhism has no father figure nor sees any need for one. Freud offers no response to this.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Do all animal forms of life show the presence of the primal horde and alpha male?
- Is religion as sign of a childlike condition that desires a 'strong man' to make everything better?
- Does the psychological discovery of how a few people come to see religion and God apply to all people?
- Is God a male for all believers in monotheistic religions?
- What religious traditions have no concept of a personal God?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Freud's approach is a bold and necessary step in the repudiation of a religion formed and promoted by a powerful and self-serving church.
2. Freud was an armchair theorist/historian who did not conduct enough research to prove any of his ideas conclusively.
3. Freud took scientific steps toward a critique of religion; this was important, however science has developed from his time leaving some of his theories intact and others not.

Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief

Philosophy of Religion Theme 2 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The third bullet point is to consider is the extent to which Jung was more positive than Freud about the idea of God.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Jung concluded that God exists as a psychic reality, a force of integration and wholeness. Thus, unlike Freud, Jung does not believe that religion is a negative neurosis.
2. Jung argued that religion was important for positive mental health; it provides symbols and myths that counteract the negative impact of a materialistic and technological culture.
3. 'God', for Jung, may represent for many people their way into discovering that they have an unconscious life; the stories about God from religion may be the way to discover that there is more to life than our current pursuits.
4. 'God' is a negative word for Jung if, by God, we mean a being that is not 'whole' such as an old white bearded man in the sky around whom we form rigid beliefs.
5. It is unclear if God is real for Jung. Jung took religious experiences and explained them psychologically – he implied that we can never know if a religious experience is real or merely created by the mind
6. Jung concluded that God is a projection of the mind - a reductionist viewpoint. This is similar to Freud's argument that religion is a form of wish-fulfilment.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Can people in the same religion mean different things by the word 'God'?
- Do we need stories and myths as a part of a healthy life – or are these just remnants of childhood?
- Shouldn't we really live in the conscious world – isn't the pursuit of the subconscious just a reversion to childhood?
- What is an example of the word 'God' being used in a way that does not exclude people and ideas?
- Can something be real in the mind and not real outside of the mind?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Jung is much more positive than Freud about God: God is a force of wholeness. The concept of God can open our lives to a deeper dimension.
- Jung's view is only positive if you do not accept a version of God that demands dogmatic belief and the rejection of one's personal journey.
- Jung is more positive than Freud, but it is not at all clear if Jung believes that God exists; it is the psychic journey that is 'God' for Jung.

Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief

Philosophy of Religion Theme 2DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fourth bullet point is to consider the effectiveness of empirical approaches as critiques of Jungian views on religion.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Many of the psychological concepts and terms coined by Jung have enabled the development of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator used in modern personality tests.
2. The beneficial aspects of religion as promoting positive mental health are demonstrable.
3. Jung developed his views from observing people positively explore religious themes in their personal journeys, literature, poetry, music, etc.
4. Jung's theories have been criticised for their lack of empirical evidence; it is not at all clear that there is a 'collective unconscious' that contains archetypes such as God.
5. There is no way to prove that religion is true or even that Jung's views are true; all that can be proved is that religious belief can be important for some people.
6. Jung was creating his own religion, a religion that values the psyche and the collective unconscious. He has replaced traditional religion with his own religion of psychoanalysis.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Is there really a shared subconscious world?
- What are archetypes and what are some examples you might see of these at pantomimes?
- Can you think of anyone for whom religion functions positively, bringing healing, wisdom or intelligence?
- Does the fact that myths contain some similar figures across cultures and time prove that there is shared truth in humanity?
- Is psychoanalysis a religion itself?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Jung's views are more scientific than Freud's: they reflect the experience of a large number of people who are attracted to the myths and symbols of religion.
- Jung was simply creating a new, liberal religion of the psyche and the psychic journey.
- Jung was right to reject the merely negative association of religion with guilt of Freud, but his own approach is not more scientific as no one can prove that there is a collective unconscious.

Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief

Philosophy of Religion Theme 2 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fifth bullet point is to consider the success of atheistic arguments against religious belief

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. An emphasis on empiricism is a characteristic of New Atheism. This fits the mood of our modern focus on science and our preference for inductive reasoning.
2. Religion is prone to violence and ignorance – as can be seen by the abuses of an all-powerful church, religious violence and faith schools requiring religious adherence as a precondition for attendance. Atheists identify with science that fights both ignorance and undermines religious superiority.
3. Science has much to offer the modern world (not only material solutions but a sense of awe and wonder at what can be discovered), answering many of those issues formally discussed by religion.
4. Religious belief is on the rise with a development of new religious ideas to counter atheistic theories relating to the existence of God.
5. There are a growing number of outspoken scientists who are religious believers such as Francis Collins.
6. How 'scientific' is the claim that religion is associated with violence and ignorance since state-sponsored communism and 'godless' revolutions have been associated with horrendous violence. By contrast, many turn to religion as a source of morality.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Do scientists always have the best answer as to how to live and make decisions? Is there room for religious wisdom to co-exist with science?
- Are religion and science separate activities, overlapping activities or diametrically opposed activities?
- Alister McGrath says we should be concerned about violence that happens when you remove religion from society – do you agree?
- Can science do the sorts of things that religion has done: inspire, give a sense of awe, provide moral direction?
- Are any arguments for the existence of the supernatural world compelling?
- Is it possible for an intelligent person to believe in God? How?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Atheist arguments render religious arguments powerless for empirical reasons. Religion relies on superstition, the 'God of the gaps' and unfounded faith.
- Atheism and religion are two separate activities that can happily coexist: science examines the 'how' of life, religion examines the 'why' of life.
- Atheist arguments against religion are anecdotal and unscientific – how can you prove that religion always leads to violence?

Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief

Philosophy of Religion Theme 2 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The sixth bullet point is to consider the extent to which religious responses to New Atheism have been successful.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

- New Atheism has been successful as there are 'irreligious conversions' each year of people who experience suffering or arguments against God and abandon the faith.
- Richard Dawkins has been successful, through his foundation, at supporting pastors and priests who decided to 'come out' as atheists; this shows the success of New Atheism.
- Atheism has gained public attention despite religious arguments against it through media coverage including the Atheist bus campaign.
- There are a growing number of religious apologists presenting rational arguments to support religious belief. Dr, Shabir Ally (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZ7aMRFYAnI) a Muslim and Alister McGrath (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=alister+mcgrath+science), a Christian are examples of this.
- A religious orientation continues to exert influence in the world and drive political thinking perhaps more than ever before.
- There is evidence that time has *not* brought about a decrease in scientists who believe in a personal God; this contradicts the view that religion and ignorance belong together.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- If atheist arguments are powerful why does religious belief persist in our society?
- Why are there young, intelligent people studying theology and religion at university?
- Do prominent scientists who believe in God simply do so because they have never really thought about their faith?
- Does the election of Donald Trump, the popularity of the Pope and the respect for the Dalai Lama show that religion is attractive and on the rise – or that it is a dangerous force in the world?
- Do all religious believers believe in the 'God of the gaps'? What other ways are there of seeing God?
- Can a religious believer also accept evolution?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Religious responses to atheism have shown persuasively that atheism is biased and unscientific when it comes to religion.
- Religious responses to atheism are not convincing because there is simply no empirical evidence to support religious belief.
- The reason religious belief persists despite atheist challenges has nothing to do with the religious responses to atheism, but is due to the fact that religion has social or psychological value.

Theme 3: Religious experience

Philosophy of Religion Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The first bullet point is to consider the impact of religious experiences upon religious belief and practice.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Religious experience may be more widespread than commonly thought – both inside and outside of religious communities, bringing some people to belief in the divine (e.g. Nicky Cruz) and/or others to appreciate the community of faith.
2. Conversion experiences such as that experienced by St Paul, promote dramatic change in moral behaviour, beliefs and inform the belief of others.
3. Religious experiences are fundamental to many of the world's faiths. In fact, before scriptures are written and traditions develop, there is a founder who has an experience of the divine real (Moses, Abraham, Muhammad, etc.); religion begins with experience. Many religious rituals (e.g. eucharist) remember and celebrate these experiences.
4. Can we separate religious experience from religious practice? Aren't they inextricably woven together? Religious belief and practice give us the language and the context in which we have experiences.
5. Repetition, rote learning and rituals can be important dimensions of our lives whether or not they bring about or coincide with 'great experiences'.
6. Perhaps it is the opposite – religious belief and practice can trigger experiences! Perhaps the religious founders would have never had the experiences they had without the more mundane social and intellectual roles that religion played in their lives.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Can those outside formalised religion have religious experiences?
- Is an especially meaningful 'coincidence' a religious experience?
- What is the role of 'experience' in the lives of religious founders?
- How do places of religion remember and celebrate religious experiences?
- Can participating in a ritual also be a religious experience?
- Are there other sources of faith that are more important to believers (in terms of belief and practice) such as sacred texts or the moral examples of their leaders ?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. You could not have religions without religious experience – it is the foundation upon which religions are built and the life-blood of their future.
2. You cannot have religious experience without first having the 'container' of ritual, tradition and scripture.
3. People have religious experiences that do not necessarily lead them to practice or believe in a particular religion.

Theme 3: Religious experience

Philosophy of Religion Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The second bullet point is to consider whether religious communities are entirely dependent on religious experiences.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Experiences such as Moses at the Burning Bush and St Paul's conversion eventually had a profound effect on a wider religious community and even the wider world!
2. Personal religious experience is central to membership and participation in some traditions – Sufism in Islam and contemplative monastic orders, Charismatic Christianity, Hasidic Judaism, etc.
3. Scripture may receive its authority from reports of experiences: Muhammad receiving the Qur'an from the Angel Jibril, Jesus' words coming from experiences, the experience of the Buddha of enlightenment, etc.
4. Those who have a religious experience may be tempted to dwell on the experience (and seek after other experiences) rather than to do the more mundane and important things prescribed by religion (i.e. practicing selfless love).
5. You do not need to have a dramatic religious experience to join or participate in many religious communities.
6. Some religious communities discourage the seeking of experiences and encourage faithfulness, moral living, etc. Some claims to religious experience are treated with great suspicion.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Is there a religion that does NOT have a religious experience of a founder at its beginning?
- Which religions/traditions stress that all members have some kind of experience?
- What experiences gave rise to specific religious writings (the Bible, the Qur'an, the Pali scriptures, etc.)?
- Can one have a spiritual or religious experience, but remain entirely selfish and self-centred?
- Are dramatic religious experiences discouraged in some religious traditions?
- Can one have a meaningful religious faith and participation without having spiritual or religious experiences?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Religious communities would die if their members did not remember the religious experiences of their founders, and have religious experiences themselves.
- Religious experience is overrated; it is more important to live morally, to live faithfully and participate regularly in rituals no matter what one is feeling.
- Religious experience is only one of many dimensions of religion; it is impossible to say which dimension is more important than the others.

Theme 3: Religious experience

Philosophy of Religion Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The third bullet point is to consider the adequacy of different definitions of miracles.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

- Miracles are unusual and often personal - it appears logical to have a variety of definitions.
- There are similarities in the way in which miracles are defined e.g. God interacting with nature in some way. Richard Swinburne, David Hume and Thomas Aquinas all accept this.
- The whole point of the concept of miracle is that intervention is required in different circumstances. The different definitions indicate an overall plan from God for a diverse and complex world.
- It is difficult to define a miracle with theologians and scholars having a range of views.
- Science challenges the traditional definitions – the laws of nature cannot be broken as Thomas Aquinas and others suggested.
- The concept of a supernatural event or miracle as described in the Bible is no longer acceptable in the twentieth century.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- If an event breaks the laws of nature, does it go against God's plan for creation?
- If God needs to intervene in nature, does this mean that his plans can go wrong?
- If God intervenes to save one person but not another, does the compromise his omnibenevolence?
- If God doesn't perform miracles, is this because he cannot?
- Is a miracle really a miracle if it doesn't break the laws of nature?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The definition of miracle as a break in the laws of nature, by Hume, is adequate because it describes an event that cannot be explained in any other way than through reference to God. This means that everyone can clearly know what kinds of events we are talking about and there is no room for individual misinterpretation.
- The definition of miracle as a beneficial coincidence, by Holland, is inadequate because it allows for almost any event to be taken as miraculous, even if it is explainable through the laws of nature. This means that miracles are highly interpretive, and this cheapens the event rather than giving it divine significance.
- It is not possible to adequately define miracle at all because such events are mythological in nature and are therefore not intended to be taken literally. These stories can tell people about a relationship that the writer has with God but can never be used to offer a basis for definition since that was not their intention.

Theme 3: Religious experience

Philosophy of Religion Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fourth bullet point is to consider how far different definitions of miracles can be considered as contradictory and therefore unsupportive of religious traditions

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Thomas Aquinas and R.F Holland have contradictory definitions which have nothing in common because Aquinas' God intervenes in the course of nature whilst Holland accepts simple coincidences.
2. David Hume's definition claims that belief in miracles is absurd, as there is insufficient empirical evidence for their occurrence. This is contrary to other scholars who see God's interaction with nature as something logical.
3. Aquinas essentially has three different definitions of miracle and so cannot even agree with himself that God does or does not break natural laws.
4. The importance of faith (which is subjective) in miracles means that there will be differing and seemingly contradictory definitions.
5. None of the scholars or theologians, not even David Hume, deny that miracles can occur, rather the discussion revolves around whether the miracle can be proved.
6. The huge variety of reported miracles defies one definition. Indeed, there is no reason why God could not intervene in the world in a variety of different ways.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Does God have to act in the same way every time that he acts?
- Does a definition, such as Hume's, always exclude the possibility of other definitions (such as Holland's)?
- Are any of the definitions of miracle self-contradictory?
- Do any of these definitions of miracle contradict the traditional, theistic qualities of God?
- Does Hume's definition of miracle exclude the possibility of such an event ever happening?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Definitions of miracle are contradictory. It is necessary that everyone is working with the same definition of miracle to talk about it. If we are all working with different definitions, there is no way to ensure that philosophical talk is meaningful or even possible.

- The different definitions of miracle are not contradictory, instead they describe the many and varied ways in which the creator might choose to interact with his creation. Some miracles could be designed to override natural laws, whilst others might not need to.

- It does not matter if definitions of miracle are contradictory or not. Ultimately, it is more important for the believer that there was an interaction of some kind between God and humankind and how that takes place is relatively unimportant. Even Jesus is reported in Mark, as refusing to perform miracles where there was a lack of faith. What occurred is less important than the belief about God that it is supporting.

Theme 3: Religious experience

Philosophy of Religion Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fifth bullet point is to consider the effectiveness of the challenges to belief in miracles.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Belief in miracles can easily be challenged as David Hume does: the personal testimony of witnesses are dubious for a variety of reasons and should not be accepted.
2. The laws of nature, established over centuries and empirically observed cannot be broken.
3. Ray Holland would argue that miracles are coincidences rather than God breaking the laws of nature, only religious people see the incident as a miracle.
4. Miracles are taken on faith, so claims of insufficient empirical evidence will not convince religious believers.
5. Within the religions of Islam and Christianity, miracles are fundamental in affirming a believer's faith and demonstrating the significance of that faith.
6. Richard Swinburne argues that a miracle, as a sign from God, points to something beyond itself. It adds to and enhances the coherence of religious faith.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- How many of Hume's arguments attack religious people rather than the possibility of miracles?
- Do Hume's challenges make it impossible for miracles to occur?
- Can an event, like turning water into wine, still be considered miraculous is there is seemingly no deep purpose behind it?
- Is it acceptable for people to take a position of faith in a miracle working God even when it goes against reason?
- What is a law of nature? How does it function?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- There is no way that someone can logically accept an interventionist, miracle-working God whilst also accepting him as omnibenevolent, creator ex nihilo in a world of suffering. Therefore, the challenges to miracle are effective because ultimately a belief in miracle puts too much strain on the character of the God of theism.

- The challenges to miracle are ineffective because they rely upon a misunderstanding of the laws of nature and how they work. Such laws are not like moral laws that must be obeyed. They are descriptive laws that explain what we might usually expect to happen. There is then no problem to be found with God acting contrary to such laws within the world.

- The challenges to miracle are irrelevant since it makes no different what kinds of empirical arguments are offered against the reality of the miraculous, a believer will accept the reality of miracles for other reasons. Their position of faith is usually as a result of personal experience of the divine, or of a pre-existing faith that has nothing to do with rational argument.

Theme 3: Religious experience

Philosophy of Religion Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The sixth bullet point is to consider the extent to which Swinburne's responses to Hume can be accepted as valid

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. There are some situations where it is quite complicated to argue that a miracle did not occur and relatively simpler to argue that it did occur.
2. Swinburne acknowledges that it is difficult to outweigh scientific evidence, but without this, the logical conclusion is that it is a miracle.
3. The principles of testimony and credulity have weight: we must trust the testimony of individuals to conduct our daily business. When we run into an unusual claim made by an otherwise trustworthy person, we must take that claim seriously.
4. Without an understanding of science someone might attribute a supernatural and miraculous cause to an event.
5. Miracles have insufficient empirical evidence to support them.
6. Hume argues that those who claim to have witnessed a miracle do so because they have something to gain, thus their testimonies are biased and not to be trusted.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Is an 'ad hominem' argument ('to a man' or one that relies on a 'personal attack') ever valid?
- Is there a good reason to doubt the testimony of a religious believer?
- Is the simplest, or most believable explanation for an extra-ordinary event, ever going to be that it was God?
- Is it fair to conclude that God does not exist since (i) so many trustworthy people believe in God and (ii) because the belief is found in different cultures and religions?
- Can we really weigh up people's testimonies? How do we know that someone is telling the truth?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Swinburne's challenges to Hume are valid since many of Hume's challenges are 'ad hominem' arguments that incorrectly attack the person rather than the logical possibility of miracles. Those that do not fall into this category have been countered logically by Swinburne simply by clarifying the definitions of laws of nature.

- Swinburne's challenges to Hume are invalid because Hume offers criticism on so many levels. Whilst each challenge may well be countered, these arguments from Hume have a 'cumulative effect', in that the sheer volume of reasons to reject accounts of miracle is enough to mean they should be rejected.

- Swinburne's challenges to Hume are partially valid. He is pragmatic in his avoidance of the skeptical bog that we might descend into if we doubt every claim we hear. However, Swinburne does not address the fact that we have substantial reason to doubt the claims of a believer simply because they claim something so fantastic.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The first bullet point is to consider the solutions presented by religious philosophers for the inherent problems of using religious language

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Religious language is a particular form of language with its own function. It does not need to be empirically proven to have meaning.
2. We can use analogies to understand things that we do not have complete knowledge of. Therefore, analogies can be used to convey religious beliefs (Aquinas).
3. Religious language expresses something more important than fact – it expresses an attitude towards life (R.M. Hare's 'blik')
4. We are used to our language having a reference in the world of the senses – statements can be empirically verified. Religious language is, strictly speaking, 'nonsense.'
5. At the very least we need statements to be 'falsifiable' – capable of being proven false. If religious believers qualify their assertions too much then they demonstrate that they are not falsifiable and therefore meaningless (Flew).
6. Aquinas' analogies only work if you have previous knowledge of God. Knowledge of God cannot be proven by any means that we use normally to prove things.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Do all religious believers take their beliefs literally?
- Is it possible to speak of non-religious things that we do not fully understand?
- Do we want all of our statements to be verifiable or falsifiable?
- Can any appeal to the senses for their belief in the existence of a divine realm?
- To what degree does the lack of agreement between believers weaken their claims?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. We can only count as meaningful language which can be verified by the senses. Religious language is not verifiable therefore it is meaningless.
2. One does not need to have completely provable knowledge of religious beliefs in order to make meaningful statements. Religious language can make use of analogy to speak about divine realities.
3. Religious language can both be 'non-sense' and meaningful at the same time. That is, you can accept that religious language is not making verifiable claims but expressing an attitude about the world which helps people to live with meaning.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The second bullet point is to consider the exclusive context of religious belief for an understanding of religious language.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Religious language can only be understood properly in the context of religious belief (just think of particular rituals); we know this from the fact that communities develop highly individualised ways of conveying meaning.
2. Important mistakes can be made if people do not understand the context of the belief and make assumptions about the language used.
3. Though there are some conversions from one faith to another, for the most part people in different religions do not convert; this emphasises that it is their context that gives meaning to their beliefs – not the fact that they are 'objectively true.'
4. Religious founders did not believe it was the community that gave their language meaning – they believed they had objectively true encounters with God which, in turn, influenced the community.
5. The fact that people share their faith, engage in interfaith dialogue, seek to covert others and engage in debate proves that religious beliefs are intelligible outside of their contexts.
6. Religious language can be easily understood outside of religious communities if it is viewed as communicating attitudes rather objective claims to reality.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- What examples can you come up with where 'everyday' words are used by believers, but with completely different meanings?
- Do you agree that religions only speak to those who were born into them?
- Can you think of an example of a culture undergoing change because of 'new' religious beliefs?
- Are there such a thing as religious conversions or are these 'conversions' only temporary?
- Are religious attitudes healthy or unhealthy?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Religious language can only be understood 'in use' – according to the rules of understanding provided by the particular communities in which it occurs. Without this, it is bound to be misunderstood.
2. Religious language makes a claim about the nature of objective reality. It should therefore be treated as a hypothesis that can be tested according to scientific means.
3. Religious language is both convincing within and outside of religious communities. Religion can best be understood by knowing the community, but the fact that religion influences culture shows that it can have an impact outside of communities.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The third bullet point is to consider the persuasiveness of arguments asserting either the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of religious language.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. That religious language as meaningful is persuasive can be demonstrated by the fact that a 'something more' quality to life can be found in many areas of life – inspiring music, art, aesthetics, etc. Religion is similar to these areas.
2. We take 'leaps' in our language and logic all the time – even in science: someone explains a concept and we have to use our imagination to fill in the gaps. This is similar to Ramsay's 'disclosure' in the religious realm.
3. Our lives are not made up of verifiable statements, but of convictions and attitudes. R.B. Braithwaite & R. M. Hare both argue that religious language has meaning because it has the function of conveying ideas and attitudes.
4. The problem with religious language is that individuals have different interpretations of the concepts and this can render them equivocal and, therefore, meaningless.
5. Even non-literal truths need to have some root in what can be observed by our senses to be meaningful. The cultured defenders of religion still have not provided this 'root'.
6. Why do we need religion to make meaning out of our lives? Cannot a sense of awe and inspiration come from gazing at the complexity of life revealed by science?

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Many involved in both the sciences and the arts will speak of moments of 'inspiration' in their work. What is the source of inspiration?
- What are some examples of 'leaps' required in order to understand a scientific idea?
- Can one have a sense of 'awe' or 'inspiration' without being influenced by music, poetry, religion, literature – and only by exposure to science?
- How widespread is the 'something more than the material world' intuition about life?
- Do different religious claims about a divine reality strengthen or weaken the religious idea that there is a divine reality?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Arguments for the meaning of religious language are persuasive because they support a widespread sense of 'disclosure' that is felt by many – regardless of the form of life in which they are involved.
- Arguments for the meaning of religious language are simply not persuasive because the defenders of religion still cannot provide evidence of even a non-literal 'God' as the source of life.
- It is impossible to tell if arguments for religious language are convincing because these arguments are directed, ultimately, to something that could only be fully known in the afterlife. The most that could be said of these claims is that they 'could be' verified in the eschaton.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fourth bullet point is to consider how far Logical Positivism should be accepted as providing a valid criterion for meaning in the use of language.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The only way to not be held hostage to sophistry is to subject all language to the same set of rules. When it comes to synthetic statements, Logical Positivism demands that language corresponds to the world of the senses. Religious language does not; it is, therefore, false.
2. Logical Positivism is a valid criterion if it is interpreted 'weakly' rather than 'strongly'. That is, a claim has to be capable of verification even if it cannot be verified immediately. When the weak form of verification is applied to religious language, it still fails the test.
3. Logical Positivism is the basis of science and, as such, the only way to make progress in the world. Religion represents 'regression'.
4. Logical Positivism misses the fact that the purpose and function of religious language is not cognitive. Religious language conveys attitudes and not facts – and these attitudes can be more important than facts; therefore, religious language is meaningful.
5. Many religious believers are Logical Positivists and accept the challenge of verification. However, some religious believers think that verification can only happen in the eschaton (eschatological verification)
6. It is possible for statements to have meaning and not be verifiable – Swinburne's 'toys cupboard' illustration reveals that we use language meaningfully even when it is not verifiable.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- What rules do we use when it comes to knowing if a statement is true or false?
- Is science the only discipline involved in establishing meaning in our lives?
- What is the difference between 'weak' and 'strong' verification?
- Are attitudes more important than facts?
- Is a religious mindset something that is necessarily unscientific?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Logical Positivism should be universally accepted as the basis for determining meaning. This is because we have lived long enough with the effects of sophistry, illusion and the abuse of power by religion.
- Logical Positivism should be rejected as the only basis for meaning because we do not actually only find meaning in cognitive statements. Life demands that we develop attitudes and convictions apart from what can be proven and healthy religion is one way that this can be done.
- Logical Positivism should be used to test religious claims, but we should keep in mind that some religious claims may not be able to be established as true or false in this world. Therefore, an agnostic position is justifiable.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fifth bullet point is to consider to what extent do the challenges to Logical Positivism provide convincing arguments to non-religious believers?

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Many types of language deal with abstract concepts and these cannot be either verified or falsified as Logical Positivists want them to be. This would apply to both religious and non-religious statements. We find meaning in art, music and poetry – why not religion?
2. Religious believers do not appear to be in a rush to 'dump' their religious attitudes in the wake of Logical Positivism. Perhaps this is because we need to have attitudes to guide our interaction with the many facts of life.
3. Many believers see theology as giving convincing reasons for the verifiability of religious assertions. For instance, both Mitchell and Hick view the discipline of theodicy as affirming religious assertions as cognitive statements. The fact that theodicy has a long and rich history is one proof that Logical Positivism may not make inroads into all religious belief.
4. For a Logical Positivist, language that talks about God is meaningless because one cannot show God to be truth or false through observation or experiments.
5. Anthony Flew argues that religious language dies the death of a thousand qualifications because believers can raise constant qualifications to any challenge. These qualifications prove that the religious statement was never cognitive in the first place.
6. Logical Positivism is convincing because it reflects a long-lasting and developing trend of placing an empirical approach to truth at the heart of human endeavor. Religion, on the other hand, is a nod to a superstitious past.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Is it unscientific to find meaning in art, poetry, literature and music?
- Religion remains strong and resilient even after so many Logical Positivist books and arguments. What are the reasons for this?
- Do believers have good reasons to believe in God despite the fact of suffering? Are any of these reasons cognitive in nature?
- Can a religious attitude help some people to live a meaningful life?
- What religious assertions have you heard that cannot be verified?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Logical Positivism is entirely convincing because it builds upon an empirical approach to life which influences decisions we make about health and technology on a daily basis. We do not want to live lives based on superstition, but on what can be proven.
- Logical Positivism is unconvincing because it ignores that which is more foundational to our lives than fact: attitudes, values, and aesthetics. Religion has more to do with these areas than it does with science.
- Logical Positivism is both relevant and irrelevant to an assessment of religious language. On the one hand, we can use this approach to examine the validity of religious claims; however, we have to accept that some religious claims can only be verified in the future and therefore there is room for faith.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The sixth bullet point is to consider whether non-cognitive interpretations are valid responses to the challenges to the meaning of religious language.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

- Non-cognitive interpretations are valid because life is full of moments of 'insight' (Ramsay) in which we realise that there is more to life than the spatio-temporal dimension. Religious language bears witness to these insights, giving them a special language and meaning.
- Non-cognitive interpretations are valid because they do not always demand a literal (univocal) interpretation. Aquinas effectively shows how analogy provides a form of knowledge that steers a middle course between univocal and equivocal interpretations.
- Verificationism is self-defeating: how can you verify the claim that all synthetic statements must be verifiable through empirical means? If we accept this challenge, then there is room for non-cognitive approaches to language.
- Analogical language rests on there actually being two existing realities that can be compared to each other. 'God' simply cannot be affirmed by empirical means therefore this non-cognitive approach fails.
- Ramsay has an explanation of moments of insight; however, these can be better explained through reductive means – psychological & social needs as well as biological processes.
- No matter how we may use analogy to explain religious language, this does not overcome the difficulty that non-cognitive language may mean different things to different people (i.e. in different religions).

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Do modern people ever have moments of insight where they come to see that there is more to life than the 'material' world?
- What possible explanations could there be for these kinds of insights (the bullet point above)?
- Is there any empirical basis for believing that there is more to the world than what we can see? Does the fact that many people believe in this way constitute a 'fact'?
- Is an analogical approach to religious language superior to a literalistic approach? Why or why not?
- What would count as evidence for the presence of a divine reality?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Non-cognitive approaches to religious language are valid because they reflect the fact that people all over the world have insights/intuitions about a 'something more' quality to life without having to affirm a literalistic approach to religious claims.
- Non-cognitive approaches to religious language are not valid because two things must exist before they can be compared; there is no empirical proof of God.
- Non-cognitive approaches are effective in showing that religious claims are not always literal, but whether even these non-literal claims are valid still needs empirical evidence.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The first bullet point is to consider the effectiveness of the terms non-cognitive, analogical and mythical as solutions to the problems of religious language.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

- To equate only cognitive language with what can be meaningful is to adopt a very restricted view of language. Since we view many non-cognitive forms of language as meaningful on a daily basis (from promise keeping to expressions of emotion) why rule out religious language as meaningful?
- Analogical and mythical language convey complex truths and values in a simple and easily communicable form.
- There seems to be no other way to communicate truths about the human relationship to the cosmos other than through non-cognitive forms of language.
- Logical Positivists argue that only cognitive language describes the empirical world. If we say that language does not need to be empirically tested, then we could be gullible to believing in anything at all.
- Competing analogies and myths along with a variety of interpretations that can be bought to these expressions means that religious language suffers from a lack of clarity and precision. This lack of clarity is a sign of unreliability in matters of truth.
- Many religious believers view their claims as cognitive and would therefore reject all three of these views (non-cognitive, analogical and mythical) along with the scholars who promote them as an aspect of their religious language.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Can we clearly understand or know the purpose of a myth?
- Can the meaning within myths be expressed in any other way?
- If we removed myths from religious language, what might we be left with?
- Are myths childish?
- If we don't come from the same situation in life as the myth writers, how can myths be meaningful to us?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Non-cognitive or mythical language is an effective solution to the problems of religious language. It allows the believer to express their relationship with the cosmos in ways that cognitive language cannot describe. At the same time, these interpretations can live alongside a scientific understanding about the world.
- Non-cognitive or mythical language is ineffective as a solution to the problems of religious language because it does not address the problem that there is no shared basis of experience between the believer and the non-believer so that communication can take place. In fact, it exacerbates this problem because it adds an extra layer of interpretation for the hearer to misunderstand.
- Non-cognitive or mythical language has some value in addressing the problems of religious language. It can be accepted as non-literal and even based in emotion or faith rather than empirical fact without losing its religious identity. However, it is an out-dated way of communicating and can be replaced with a more consistent, mature and scientific understanding of language.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The second bullet point is to consider the relevance of religious language issues in the 21st Century.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Symbols are already an important part of 21st century life – a common way of communicating complicated ideas, e.g. emojis, epic fictional films, sports and advertising iconography.
2. The emotional response provoked by religious language conveys truths which are still relevant to believers (and even non-believers) in the 21st century.
3. Religious language is non-cognitive and powerful, dealing with issues beyond the empirical. Perhaps matters of emotions, ethics, aesthetics, values and religion are too important to ever be irrelevant?
4. The understanding of religious language can change over time. Language is never static. This means that it is impossible to understand what religious founders really mean nor to think that religious claims won't change in future.
5. In a multicultural society, there may be many symbols and many interpretations which may confuse and even divide believers. In fact, the competing claims of different religions can be seen as a sign of the meaninglessness of religious language.
6. Religious language is not readily meaningful to non-believers. It seems that you need to know an entire 'world' of language and meaning given by a religious community in order to understand religious claims.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Can a statement that has a fluid meaning ever be understood by people living at a different time?
- How can people of different cultures or faiths communicate if they all have different symbols in their language?
- If scripture is symbolic, has its meaning been lost in time?
- How can we check whether religious symbols are correct?
- We live in a scientific age – has the need for symbols been lost or replaced?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Religious language is relevant in the 21st century because it enriches the language of any and all cultures. Without the use of symbols in modern society we risk reducing language to the 'Newspeak' put forward by Orwell in Nineteen Eighty-Four, that limits and controls human individuality.
- Religious language is not relevant in the 21st century because scriptural ideas expressed through symbols are outdated and therefore meaningless to us today. We cannot hope to access the full meaning of ideas from other times and places since culture has evolved.
- Religious language can be partially understood through historical analysis and can speak to a dimension of life that we might experience, but we will always want to know if this language really refers to 'reality'. Therefore we need to judge it by cognitive approaches which will inevitably suggest that we not put our trust in religious assertions and look for a natural explanation behind religious language.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.
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The third bullet point is to consider the extent to which language games provide a suitable way of resolving the problems of religious language.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Wittgenstein argued that problems with religious language stem from a misunderstanding of it. He focused on the way such language is used – meaningful discourse is determined by language users rather than reality.
2. Religious language fits with Wittgenstein's coherence theory of truth: something has meaning if it is coherent to you – it fits with the rest of your beliefs.
3. As Alan Watts points out, it is useful to have more than one way of speaking about our experience of the world and 'language games' allows this to happen - more than one style of expression can considered meaningful.
4. If meaning is found in context, then who decides between competing versions of meaning? Is this ultimately a relativist theory of truth?
5. To understand language games there is a need for certain pre-suppositions and beliefs. They can only be understood by those within a restricted community.
6. When religious believers make claims about their faith, they often appear to be trying to make cognitive claims. This means they should not be exempt from the same analysis as any other cognitive type claim, yet Wittgenstein seems to be trying to give religious language immunity.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Can someone participate in more than one language game at a time?
- What are the difficulties we face when understanding the meaning of language in an area which is completely new to us (football, gaming, church, etc.)?
- Does there need to be anyone else in my language game for it to be meaningful?
- Does language game theory allow nonsensical claims to gain status as 'meaningful'?
- How can we go about challenging or analysing a religious claim?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Language games provide a suitable way of resolving the problems of religious language because Wittgenstein accounts for the wide variety of ways in which humans communicate ideas with each other. This is a more practical way of understanding language and truth and so it is much more suitable than the requirement for all meaningful statements to be verified.

- Language games do not provide a suitable way of resolving the problems of religious language. Wittgenstein attempts to make religious believers immune from challenge by simply describing them as a different game. This makes it impossible for anyone to question claims that appear contradictory or even against reason and this is potentially dangerous.

- Language games provide only a partially suitable way of resolving the problems of religious language. On the one hand, it respects the fact that the meaning of language can only be fully understood in context. However, for many believers, 'God exists' is not simply a game or non-cognitive for many. They would argue that it is a factual claim and something that they know to be true.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fourth bullet point is to consider whether symbolic language can be agreed as having adequate meaning as a form of language

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Using symbols to speak of 'God' prevents us from thinking that God can be encapsulated in language. It is a meaningful way to speak of transcendence. Tillich's understanding of symbols enables people to do more than just label empirical facts
2. Many other scholars have made use of symbols in academic work including Jung and Durkheim who regard symbols as both important and useful.
3. Symbolic language has many useful functions in society including giving us a way to express emotion and express dimensions of life that cannot be spoken about by the sciences.
4. The meaning of symbols changes with culture and time; this means that the original intended meaning of a religious text can never be adequately grasped
5. Since symbols are non-cognitive, we can never know if we understand the symbol in the same way as anyone else.
6. There is no way to know if anything factual or cognitive is conveyed by symbols, so they are useless in communicating anything to other people.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Can we define a symbol without resorting to symbolic language in the description?
- Can you verify or falsify a symbol?
- How can we ensure that we all understand a symbol in the same way?
- Why might it be important that we all understand a symbol in the same way?
- If a symbol points beyond itself, should we expect to be able to check what it is pointing to?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Symbolic language does have adequate meaning as a form of language because it enables the religious believer to understand scripture in ways that make sense in the modern world. We cannot rationally understand much of scripture to be literally true, but if it is symbolic it can contain a rich texture of meaning and be a vital source of faith.

- Symbolic language has inadequate meaning as a form of language because a religious believer will be unable to accept that their religious claims are not based in fact. When a believer claims that 'God exists' they do not mean this symbolically; they are stating what they believe to be a proposition, and this is not addressed by symbolic language.

- Symbolic language is partially adequate in providing a meaningful form of language because it gives believers and non-believers alike a common frame of reference by which they can understand each other, but it gives no concrete way of ensuring that language is understood in exactly the same way.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The fifth bullet point is to consider how far the works of Randall and Tillich provide a suitable counter-challenge to Logical Positivism

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Paul Tillich argued that symbols keep believers from falling into the trap of thinking of God as a 'thing' that can be measured (and therefore dismissed by logical positivists). They transcend empirical information, giving a much deeper meaning to concepts such as God, 'the ground of being'.
2. Logical Positivism cannot see emotional and spiritual dimensions as meaningful. Yet, many experience these dimensions nonetheless. J.H. Randall believed that symbols demand an emotional response, this communicates far more than factual data.
3. J. H. Randall observed that symbols motivate believers, bringing them together with shared responses and understanding of religious actions. Thus, they have a valuable social function.
4. Religious and mythical language has no meaning in the modern world, as it cannot be verified.
5. According to Ayer, sentences and claims relating to God are meaningless as they are metaphysical in nature.
6. There is a difficulty in fully understanding what is and what is not symbolic language and what the symbols are trying to convey.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Are symbols really that different from signs?
- Would a religious believer like the idea that the religious language contained in scripture is symbolic?
- What knowledge can a symbol bring?
- Do symbols offer a challenge to scientific / empirical language?
- Is it possible for a religion to make any cognitivist claim at all?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Randall and Tillich offer a very suitable counter-challenge to logical positivism since they provide a clear criteria of meaning that enables the believer and non-believer alike to communicate. This means that it is possible to communicate abstract or emotional ideas rather than only the limited range of facts that can be verified or falsified.

- Randall and Tillich offer no suitable counter-challenge to logical positivism because many religious believers would argue that when they make religious claims, they are trying to say something cognitivist. To reduce God's revelation to merely a symbol, is to take away the knowledge and truth contained in such language.

- Randall and Tillich offer some suitable counter- challenges to logical positivism in that they provide a criteria of meaning that is flexible and allows for a richness of human experience. However, they do not succeed completely because they use
- religious language to describe religious language and none of their claims can really be checked according to any external standard.

Theme 4: Religious language

Philosophy of Religion Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

The sixth bullet point is to consider whether the strengths of language games outweigh the weaknesses.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. There is meaning outside of science. We learn that meaning through the rules and norms of communities. After all, we have meaningful discussions of the world beyond the literal (poetry, music and art). Wittgenstein turns western philosophy on its head – we don't start with individuals having 'foundational experiences', we start with communities teaching language.
2. Communication between individuals and groups becomes meaningful in precisely the way that Wittgenstein suggests – in activities guided by rules, understood in a 'form of life'.
3. When it is realised that language has meaning in a specific context this removes the problem of religious language. That it is the medium by which a reality is expressed and this can promote dialogue and respect.
4. Isn't this theory self-defeating? If the meaning of language is found 'in use' then how can Wittgenstein stand outside of all forms of life and declare that this is the case?
5. Is there any reality outside of language games? Wittgenstein is not clear? Don't we need science to establish final truth?
6. The language game approach assumes that we learn different language rules in different groups/forms of life – if this is true then it is difficult to speak to one another. Yet we speak to each other all the time and seem to understand what we are saying. Maybe we don't always have to 'learn the rules'?

Key questions that may arise could be:

- Is there any kind of talk that Wittgenstein would consider meaningless?
- Is it really impossible for people in different forms of life to communicate to one another?
- How might a believer respond to the notion that they take an anti-realist position?
- Can an atheist ever understand the claims of a religious believer? (Or can the believer understand the atheist?)
- What difference does Wittgenstein make to the understanding of religious language?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The strengths of language games outweigh the weaknesses because it gives a very clear account of how we learn language and meaning. We adopt understanding from our environment or form of life and so there is no reason why our comprehension should be any better or worse than any other form of life. Religious language can then only be understood by those using it from within their form of life.
- The weaknesses of language games outweigh the strengths because language it deprives anyone of final meaning and truth. It also acts as a barrier to understanding – we can't know what other mean if we are not in their 'form of life'. This clearly does not reflect the reality of what goes on in religion when we witness people changing from faith to no faith or vice versa.

- It does not matter whether Language Games has more weaknesses or more strengths because ultimately Wittgenstein makes no difference to the way that we use language and offers no firm foundation for change. Thus, the Logical Positivist will continue to see the difficulties, and the religious believer will continue to make the claims. Nothing changes as a result.