

# Edexcel A2 Implications 6RS04: Philosophy of Religion

## A workbook and study guide

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## What do you have to do in the exam?

The examination for this unit is 1 hour 15 minutes long. You will be given an extract from **one** of the passages you have studied from the Anthology and you will answer **one** question on it. The question is in **two** parts and will always be the same. It is deliberately open ended to ensure that a full range of possible responses can be credited:

- (a) Explain the argument and/or interpretation in the passage. (30)
- (b) Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience. (20)

Notice that part (a) is worth 30 marks, while part (b) is worth 20 marks. In the exam you should aim to spend about 45 minutes answering part (a) and about 30 minutes answering part (b).

The examiner will mark your answer against two Assessment Objectives (AOs).

- AO1: Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study. Candidates should also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different elements of their course of study.
- AO2: Critically evaluate and justify a point of view through the use of evidence and reasoned argument. Candidates should also relate elements of their course of study to their broader context and to specified aspects of human experience.

AO1 is covered by part (a) of the question and AO2 by part (b). You should treat both parts of the question separately, rather than running them together in one single essay. This will make it easier for the examiner to credit your answer. Good marks for part (a) will derive from being able to express and expand on the ideas in the passage without relying on repeating the wording of the passage itself, using well chosen quotations rather than copying out chunks of text. You should use examples and illustrations and be able to explore the reasoning behind the passage. Good marks for (b) will arise from a balanced discussion and evaluation of the implications of the ideas expressed in the passage and your own response to them.

- Answers may benefit from demonstrating an awareness of the rest of the passage, although this is not essential to reach the highest levels.
- There is no presumption that you should have a detailed knowledge of scholars referenced in passing in the passages.
- You may draw on material from elsewhere in your studies for this qualification.

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**What is meant by ‘religion and human experience’?**

These terms should not confuse you and are not intended to be drawn out separately and specifically. However, as a general guideline you could think of them as incorporating the following ideas. We have left extra space at the end of the table for you to add other ideas as you think of them.

<b>Implications for religion</b>	<b>Implications for human experience</b> Do these ideas have implications for any of the following?:
How may the ideas impact on an individual’s beliefs?	Beliefs about life and death
How may they impact on the life of the religious community?	Ethical and moral beliefs
How may believers be called to respond to these ideas?	Society and the wider community
What impact may they have on the role of sacred texts, religious leaders, and central religious doctrines?	Human relationships
How may these ideas impact on the claims a believer may make about the possibility, or reality, of a relationship with a personal God?	What people find important in their lives
	How people interpret the world and their place in it

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**Useful guidance ...**

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It is far better to avoid a 'passage spotting' approach to working with these texts and instead aim for a good understanding of the whole passage, as well as finding links between the three passages. If you rely on 'passage spotting' you will inevitably be disappointed if the passage you want to appear in the exam, or think will be in the exam, is not the one which is used. This will not put you in the right frame of mind for thinking about the passage you *are* asked to write about.

Be reassured, however, that the people who choose the extracts for the exam paper each year do not try to make things difficult for you. They are unlikely to choose extracts which are obscure or which do not include much for you to examine and assess. Passages which include lists of names or dates, bullet points, multiple quotations from other sources, references to other chapters or sections of the book from which the passage is drawn, or which offer little substantive content, are not going to do a good job for you or them. The most interesting and engaging extracts, and those which allow you to explore a range of issues, are more likely to appear on the exam paper than those which limit you before you have even started.

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## Anthology passage: RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

### ‘God-talk is evidently nonsense’ (A.J. Ayer)

#### Introducing the passage

This passage is originally from *Language, Truth and Logic*, written by A.J. Ayer in 1936. It is adapted from Chapter 6 ‘Critique of Ethics and Theology’. The Edexcel Anthology uses a version from *Philosophy of Religion: a guide and anthology* (ed. Brian Davies, OUP 2000), but you may find it interesting to read the whole chapter in Ayer’s original text, published by Penguin.

The passage is based on the work of the Logical Positivist school of philosophy and an understanding of this is the key to your way in to this article.

This passage is relatively short compared to the other Philosophy passages, but it is very dense and every paragraph contains plenty of useful ideas. One advantage the passage offers to you is that the main idea – that statements about God are meaningless – is carried through in every paragraph, so whichever extract is set in the exam you will be able to use a lot of the same material. You are also likely to be able to remember quite a lot about the passage in exam conditions, so you are more likely to be able to refer to other paragraphs other than the one on the exam paper. This is not vital for high marks, but it can be used to your advantage.

Several key topics in the Philosophy and Ethics areas of A2, Unit 3: Developments will help you in your understanding of this passage:

- Religious experience
- Non-existence of God and critiques of religious belief
- A study of religious language
- Meaning and definition of ethical terms

Let’s start by giving an overview of the whole passage, what it is about and Ayer’s main arguments.

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## Overview

### Is God even probable?

- Ayer begins by claiming that the existence of a being with the attributes of God cannot be demonstratively proved, nor even shown to be probable.
- If God were probable, then the proposition that he exists would be an empirical hypothesis – in other words, there would be some way to test it.
- If we could test it, then we could deduce certain experiential propositions – that is, make verifiable statements about God – but we can't.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you understand the meaning of probability*
- ✓ *you understand what would constitute an empirical hypothesis*
- ✓ *you know and understand the Verification Principle.*

### Metaphysics

- Ayer argues that to say 'God exists' is simply to say that certain actions have occurred in a particular sequence.
- Believers say God can be known through empirical manifestations, such as creation, the natural world and the universe. However, God cannot be defined by those manifestations.
- Ayer says this means God is metaphysical and therefore cannot be proved to be true or false; therefore, we cannot talk meaningfully about him.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you can apply this idea with reference to the Design or Cosmological Arguments*
- ✓ *you understand the meaning of metaphysical.*

### Atheists and agnostics

- An agnostic holds that God is a possibility, but that there is no good reason to believe or disbelieve in God. For an atheist, it is most probable that God does not exist.
- Ayer said that both views are based on unverifiable propositions and so both positions are ruled out.

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- If God is a metaphysical term, the atheist’s claim that God does not exist is as nonsensical as the theist’s claim that he does exist.
- Since the agnostic can make no observations to confirm or disconfirm their view, agnosticism ‘is also ruled out’.

Check that:

- ✓ you understand the meaning of atheism and agnosticism.

**God and the empirical world**

- God is said to control the empirical world and is therefore superior to the empirical world yet he exists outside it.
- If his qualities are non-empirical, then God is an unintelligible notion.
- If God is unverifiable, then ‘God’ is simply a word. It tells us nothing about him.

Check that:

- ✓ you know and understand the attributes of the God of classical theism
- ✓ you understand why these attributes are ‘non-empirical’.

**Transcendent truths**

- Ayer claims that: ‘There cannot be any transcendent truths of religion.’
- If we say that the nature of God is a mystery, this is unintelligible.
- If we say God is an object of faith not reason, this is also unintelligible.
- Therefore, ‘It is impossible for a sentence to be both significant and to be about God’.

Check that:

- ✓ you know what is meant by transcendent truths
- ✓ you understand the concepts of faith and reason.

**The God of the mystics**

- Mystics claim that God does reveal truths, but these cannot be explained to everyone.
- Ayer says this is nothing more than intuition and so is not sufficient evidence for the existence of God. If mystics had acquired any factual information they would reveal them.

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- The same applies to those who claim to have encountered God in a religious experience. 'The fact that people have religious experiences is interesting from a psychological point of view, but it does not in any way imply that there is such a thing as religious knowledge.'

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you understand what is meant by a mystic*
- ✓ *you understand what is meant by intuition*
- ✓ *you understand the argument from religious experience.*

**Ayer's conclusion**

- Religious experience is not a valid proof of God's existence, nor does it provide religious knowledge (facts).
- This is because: 'No act of intuition can be said to reveal a truth about a matter of fact unless it issues in verifiable propositions.'
- The same problem arises in a consideration of moral knowledge.
- Science is the only discipline which offers verifiable, empirical propositions.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you understand why Ayer reaches this conclusion, even if you disagree with it*
- ✓ *you understand why, in Ayer's thinking, moral knowledge, like religious knowledge, is impossible.*

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## Questions to consider

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### Paragraph one

- What is the significance of Ayer's claim that it is agreed that the existence of God '...cannot be demonstratively proved ... at any rate by philosophers'?
- In the second line, Ayer refers to the 'attributes which define the god of any non-animistic religion'. What do you think these attributes are? What is a 'non-animistic religion'?
- What is meant by the phrases 'demonstratively proved', 'empirical hypothesis' and 'experiential propositions'?
- What does Ayer mean when he says that some claim that the existence of 'regularity in nature constitutes sufficient evidence for the existence of God'?
- What evidence could be used to support this claim?
- In what sense might it be said that God is a 'transcendent being who might be known through certain empirical manifestations'?
- What does it mean to say 'god is a metaphysical term' (line 15)? Explain why you think Ayer's claim is right or wrong.
- Ayer ends the paragraph by claiming that 'no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance'. What does he mean? Do you agree?
- Do believers understand God as transcendent and metaphysical? If so, does this have the serious implications for speaking meaningfully about God that Ayer suggests? To what extent might believers be troubled by this?
- Ayer puts considerable emphasis on the lack of empirical evidence to prove the existence of God. Do you think empirical evidence is as important as he claims? Give your reasons.
- What aspects of the paragraph are factually true or false and which are Ayer's opinion?
- Summarise the main points of this paragraph in your own words. Use no more than two direct quotations from the text.
- Do you broadly agree or disagree with Ayer's main arguments in this paragraph? Give your reasons.
- If Ayer is right in this paragraph, then what are the implications of his being right?
- If Ayer is wrong, then what would be the implications of his being wrong?

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**Paragraph two**

- What is a 'religious assertion'? Give two examples.
- Explain the difference between the 'possibility' of God's existence and the 'probability' of it.
- Do you agree with Ayer's characteristics of an agnostic and an atheist? Which, if any, do you think Ayer himself is? Why?
- Ayer claims the agnostic has found 'no good reason either to believe or disbelieve' in God. Suggest what might constitute a 'good reason' and why.
- Why does Ayer believe that agnostic and atheistic assertions that there is no god are 'nonsensical'? By what criteria might he be right or wrong?
- What does Ayer mean when he claims that 'it is only a significant proposition that can be significantly contradicted'?
- Ayer seems to suggest that neither the atheistic nor the agnostic arguments for the existence of God have any merit. Do you think that either the atheistic or the agnostic argument is more persuasive than the other?
- Do you think that Ayer's views are too restrictive or has he accurately assessed the value of religious assertions?

**Paragraph three**

- Give an example, other than Ayer's own, of a way in which deities (or *the* deity) may be 'identified with natural objects'.
- Why does Ayer say that 'assertions concerning them may be allowed to be significant'? Does this contradict his earlier claims?
- Who is Jehovah?
- What does Ayer mean by 'sophisticated religions'? What makes them 'sophisticated'? Why do you think he makes this qualification?
- In what sense can it be said that God is not 'located' in the empirical world?
- In what ways is God held to be 'superior to the empirical world'?
- What does Ayer mean by God's 'super-empirical attributes'? Give examples.
- What are the implications if Ayer is right to make the claim that 'the notion of a person whose essential attributes are non-empirical is not an intelligible notion at all'?
- What does Ayer mean when he says that 'God' is 'not a genuine name'?
- Do you agree or disagree with Ayer's reasoning in this paragraph, and why?

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**Paragraph four**

- Would it be useful to ‘enter more deeply into the causes of religious feeling’ or to ‘discuss the probability of the continuance of religious belief’? Give reasons for your answer.
- Is Ayer making a distinction between religious belief and religious knowledge? If so, clarify this distinction, using examples.
- Ayer dismisses ‘transcendent truths of religion’ as ‘not literally significant’. Are there other ‘truths’ which according to his reasoning he would be compelled to dismiss?

**Paragraph five**

- Why does Ayer say that ‘the nature of God is a mystery which transcends human understanding’? Is he right? Give reasons for your answer.
- How might a religious believer respond to Ayer’s claim that this is an unintelligible notion? How might they suggest that Ayer has misunderstood this claim?
- Is Ayer correct in his claim that ‘what is unintelligible cannot significantly be described’? Give reasons for your answer. What, for Ayer, constitutes ‘description’?
- In what sense is God ‘an object of faith’ and what does this mean? What is the difference between an ‘object of faith’ and an ‘object of reason’?
- Do you agree with Ayer that the ‘existence of God must be taken on trust since it cannot be proved’? How would someone who has had a religious experience respond to this claim?
- From your wider studies, identify two scholars who would challenge Ayer’s views, and explain their arguments.
- What does Ayer mean when he says that ‘God is the object of a purely mystical intuition’? Is he right? How do you understand the term ‘intuition’?
- Is Ayer correct to suggest that God ‘cannot be defined in terms which are intelligible to the reason’? Give reasons for your answer?
- Ayer claims that ‘it is impossible for a sentence both to be significant and to be about God’. What do you think Ayer means by ‘significant’? Is he right?
- What is a ‘mystic’ and why, according to Ayer, is he ‘bound to talk nonsense’?
- From your wider studies, what aspects of religious experience might you offer to both support and oppose Ayer’s claims?
- What are the implications if Ayer’s views are right? And if they are wrong?

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**Paragraph six**

- Explain the meaning of the terms ‘faculty of intuition’, ‘cognitive faculty’, ‘empirically determined’ and ‘intelligible propositions’.
- Which aspects of this paragraph are factual and which are Ayer’s opinion?
- In what sense does the mystic’s intuition ‘reveal truths to him’?
- Why is the mystic unable to explain to others what these truths are?
- Why, according to Ayer, is the mystic ‘unable to produce any intelligible propositions’? Do you agree?
- How might a mystic be able to ‘indicate in some way the genuineness of his discovery’?
- Why does Ayer claim that ‘mystical intuition is not a genuinely cognitive state’? How would a mystic respond to this?
- How far do you agree with Ayer’s claims that (i) ‘the mystic does not give us any information about the external world’ and (ii) ‘he merely gives us indirect information about the condition of his own mind’? Do you think that Ayer is implying that the condition of the mystic’s mind is not healthy in some way?
- Why, in your opinion, is Ayer so strongly opposed to the claims of mystics?
- How might a mystic respond to Ayer’s views?
- From your wider studies, what arguments can you offer in support of mystic claims about God?
- Is Ayer right to insist that religious claims must be supported with empirical evidence in order to be meaningful? Even if this is true of other claims, would it be reasonable to suggest that religious claims should be considered in a different category and meaningful by different criteria?
- Do you think it *is* possible to speak of God intelligibly without empirical evidence? Give reasons for your answer. Is such talk meaningful only to a believer in God?

**Paragraph seven**

- What is the argument from religious experience?
- From your studies, give the views of one or more scholars who believe that the argument from religious experience is ‘a valid argument in favour of the existence of a god’.
- What does it mean to say that ‘it is logically possible for men to be immediately acquainted with God’? Give examples from your wider studies.

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- What does Ayer mean when he says that ‘the man who asserts that he is seeing God is merely asserting that he is experiencing a peculiar kind of sense-content’? Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
- How would a person who believes that they have had a religious experience respond to Ayer’s assertions?
- In what sense is a person seeing God ‘experiencing a religious emotion’?
- Why does Ayer criticise the claim that ‘there exists a transcendent being who is the object of this emotion’?
- Why, according to Ayer, is it rational to believe a man who claims to have seen a yellow patch, and to disbelieve a man who claims to have seen God? Is he right? What is the difference between the two claims?
- Is this analogy between experiencing a yellow patch and experiencing God sound?
- How could Swinburne’s Principle of Testimony be applied here?
- What is the basis for Ayer’s claim that the sentence ‘there exists a transcendent god’ (line 15) has ‘no literal significance’? Do you agree?

**Paragraph eight**

- Ayer claims that ‘the argument from religious experience is ‘altogether fallacious’. From your studies, which philosophers and ideas might you use to counter this claim?
- Explain what Ayer means by ‘altogether fallacious’. Is this a helpful term for him to use here? What aspect of the argument does he consider ‘fallacious’?
- In what ways might religious experience be ‘interesting from the psychological point of view’?
- Is this view entirely unacceptable to those who have had a religious experience or would they agree to some extent? Give reasons for your answer.
- What is the difference between reducing religious experience to a psychological event and suggesting that psychological factors may help to understand religious experience?
- Do you agree that the scientific method is the only reliable means of seeking to verify truth claims? Give reasons for your answer.
- What are the implications for religion and human experience of Ayer’s support of science as the only basis for making significant propositions?
- Explain the views of one scholar who would agree with him and one who would disagree.

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**Consolidation exercises**

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- 1. Write a paragraph on the work of the Logical Positivist movement which you could use as part of a response to any examination passage taken from this article.
- 2. Write a paragraph on other aspects of the study of religious language which may support Ayer’s views and those which oppose them, or which offer an alternative way of understanding how religious claims may be significant. Decide how you could use this paragraph in a response to various extracts from this passage.
- 3. Write a paragraph which you could apply to any passage from this article which discusses the implications of Ayer’s argument that ‘God-talk is evidently nonsense’ being correct **and** a paragraph which discusses the implications of his argument being wrong.
- 4. Imagine that the *whole* of this passage were the basis of the examination question (which would never happen!) and write an examination-style response which examines the key ideas of the *whole* passage and discusses the implications of these ideas with reference to the *whole* passage.
- 5. Write a paragraph on the argument from religious experience which you could apply to an examination of one of several extracts from this passage.
- 6. Use the internet to research contemporary religious experiences (for example <http://www.alisterhardyreligiousexperience.co.uk/>) and consider how far these examples support or challenge Ayer’s views on the value of religious experience for speaking meaningfully of God. Write a short paragraph which you could use in an examination answer.
- 7. Find out about the work of Michael Persinger who devised the ‘helmet experiment’ to investigate the causes of religious experience. Write a short paragraph arguing for or against the view that his work confirms the significance of religious experience in empirical terms.
- 8. Find out about the views of Richard Dawkins on the scientific method as the means of finding out more about the world. Write a short paragraph on how far his views support those of Ayer. Then write a paragraph challenging Dawkins’ views.
- 9. Go through every paragraph of the passage and identify those ideas, key terms, phrases or concepts which are in *more than one paragraph*. For example, in paragraph 1, lines 17–18, the phrase ‘no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance’ is very similar to the claim in paragraph 4, lines 3–4, ‘For the sentences which the theist uses to express such ‘truths’ are not literally significant.’ Remember that you can draw on these repeated ideas even if they aren’t in the extract on the exam paper.

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**Ayer: ‘God-talk is evidently nonsense’ – Worksheet activities**

Explain the key points of the following paragraphs. Use no more than **three** bullet points per paragraph:

Paragraph one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
Paragraph two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
Paragraph three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
Paragraph four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
Paragraph five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
Paragraph six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
Paragraph seven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
Paragraph eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>

What is the conclusion that Ayer reaches in the final paragraph? Is it balanced and fair and supported by evidence?

Which aspects of Ayer's arguments are facts and which are his opinions?

<b>Facts</b>	<i>e.g. 'It is characteristic of an agnostic to hold that the existence of god is a possibility ...'</i>	What evidence supports these facts?	What evidence may be used to counter these facts?

<b>Opinions</b>	e.g. <i>'... that it is 'easily shown' that there is no way of proving the existence of God to be even probable.'</i>	What support may be given to Ayer's opinions?	What challenges may be made to these opinions?
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What other material from your AS and A2 studies (including all subjects) can you use in your answer to support and/or oppose Ayer's views?

What scholars and quotations can you utilise in your answer that are not directly alluded to in this passage?

Is there anything you can use from the Bible and/or other religious texts?

Which of Ayer's claims do you support and why?

Which of Ayer's claims do you challenge and why?

If Ayer is right, then what are the implications for:

(i) Religious believers/mystics?

(ii) Those who claim to have had a religious experience?

(iii) The world?

If Ayer is wrong, then what are the implications for:

(i) Religious believers/mystics?

(ii) Those who claim to have had a religious experience?

(iii) The world?

What do you think is the strongest aspect of Ayer's argument? What is the weakest?

What are the most convincing arguments that you have found from your studies that (a) support and (b) oppose Ayer's views?

Taking everything into account, do you agree or disagree with Ayer? Give your reasons.

## Anthology passage: RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

### ‘Can we know God by experience?’ (P. Donovan)

#### Introducing the passage

This passage is originally from *Interpreting Religious Experience* by Peter Donovan (Sheldon Press 1979). The Edexcel Anthology uses a version from *Philosophy of Religion: a guide and anthology* (ed. Brian Davies, OUP 2000).

This passage is the longest of the three Philosophy passages in the anthology, and for this reason it may look a little daunting at first sight. However, be reassured, as the ideas contained within it are not overly complex, and are repeated several times throughout the passage. There are a relatively small number of key ideas and you can recycle them effectively in responses to many possible exam extracts. Another bonus is that there are some excellent connections you can make to Ayer’s text. This is a very useful strategy, as not only can you use one passage to reinforce your understanding of the other, but you can also gain credit in both parts of the question for examining and clarifying issues by reference to ideas from the other passage.

You are likely to have made a detailed study of religious experience already for A2 Unit 3: Developments. Take advantage of this overlap, which can also work the other way, as you can use ideas from Donovan in your Developments essay should you choose to. You will also be able to make links with issues discussed in a study of the non-existence of God and critiques of religious belief and religious language.

First, let’s consider the key ideas of the whole passage. Because there are so many paragraphs in this article, page numbers from the Anthology are used for reference. The complete Anthology is available on the Edexcel website – see page 2 for details.

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**Overview**

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**Inner conviction (page 121)**

- We must take seriously the particular variety of religious experience which leads to knowledge of God arising from inner conviction.
- Inner conviction may lead people to ‘just know’ many things, but it is not a reliable guide to their truthfulness or integrity.
- We often appeal to such inner conviction in everyday matters, but can we rely on such intuition in religious matters?

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you have good notes on the argument from religious experience in your Developments file. Do you understand this topic?*
- ✓ *you can define ‘inner conviction’ and ‘intuition’*
- ✓ *you understand the notion of ‘just knowing’.*

**Knowledge from intuition (pages 121–2)**

- God may be known indirectly and intuitively through events and experiences in the world.
- Intuitive knowledge we have of other people offers a parallel to intuitive knowledge of God.
- This intuitive knowledge has a ‘mediated immediacy’. It is not reasoned or inferred knowledge, although the intellect supports the intuition.
- Owen sees all genuine religious experience as offering intuitive knowledge of God, whether derived from nature, scripture or worship.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you can offer examples of ways in which God can be known through events and experiences in the world*
- ✓ *you can offer examples of how knowledge of God may be gained through nature, scripture or worship*
- ✓ *you understand the difference between intuitive knowledge and knowledge which is reasoned or inferred.*

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Faith (pages 122–3)

- Biblical narrative and teaching reveals God as intuitively known through a range of media.
- Intuitive knowledge of God is characteristic of faith: an intuitive way of knowing which enables a relationship with God.
- Such knowledge of God requires ‘no further argument or support’.

Check that:

- ✓ *you understand how the Bible reveals God in this way, and can give examples*
- ✓ *you understand the meaning of faith*
- ✓ *you understand the meaning of revelation*

**Feeling certain and being right (page 123–5)**

- Critics of this view object to the problem of relying on intuition as a way of knowing God. The issue is one of certainty.
- We can feel certain without being right, although we are so familiar with ‘having an intuition’ that we mistake it as a reliable indication of being right.
- How can we therefore test when our intuition is right? We can’t rely on intuition to test itself. Although we sometimes have reliable intuitions, this is due to the situation not to the intuition itself.
- Knowledge by intuition seems to be more reliable in some cases than in others. Self-deception and the wide range of intuitions held by different people mean we should be cautious.
- Those supporters of intuition as a way of knowing God have built their arguments on the foundation of far more evidence than that offered by intuition alone.
- The person who claims intuitive knowledge of God is not speaking nonsense.

Check that:

- ✓ *you understand why certainty is important to philosophy*
- ✓ *you understand the problems of relying on intuition and can give examples*
- ✓ *you understand why those who claim to know God by intuition draw on other evidence*
- ✓ *you understand the significance of maintaining that the person who claims intuitive knowledge of God is not speaking nonsense.*

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**Knowledge about and experience of (page 125–8)**

- Martin Buber argues that experience of God leads to an ‘I–You’ relationship with him. God seeks a person-to-person relationship with human beings.
- Belief *in* God is perceived to be better than belief *about* God. The ‘I–You’ relationship is beyond analysis.
- Nevertheless, there are serious challenges faced by the assumptions made about the ‘I–You’ relationship, since apparently genuine ‘I–You’ encounters may be wrong.
- It is necessary to have some degree of ‘knowledge about’ God (or human persons) to have genuine ‘experience of’ them.
- For the philosopher, ‘knowledge about’ is more valuable than ‘experience of’ although the believer rates the latter more highly.
- With people, and with God, an ‘I–You’ relationship presupposes an ‘I–It’ relationship: otherwise the believer is compelled to say they are experiencing a person they do not know.
- First-hand knowledge does not necessarily count as knowledge at all when second-hand knowledge is quite sufficient. But first-hand experience does add a set of impressions not available from second-hand knowledge.
- We are in a position to gain extra knowledge from first-hand experience.
- First-hand encounters with God are not necessarily just for gaining further knowledge: they are sought for the sake of love, worship and fellowship.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you understand the distinction between an ‘I–You’ and ‘I–It’ relationship*
- ✓ *you understand the difference between ‘knowledge about’ and ‘experience of’*
- ✓ *you understand how first-hand experience can increase awareness and understanding.*

**The sense of knowing God (page 128)**

- The inner conviction of God’s reality is vital for religious belief and generates a sense of knowing God, and philosophical difficulties should not detract from it.
- However, the sense of knowing is not a sufficient form of knowledge, but that should not lead us to take no interest in the knowledge of God communicated through religious experience.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you understand how the stages of Donovan’s article have led to this conclusion.*

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**Questions to consider**

**Inner conviction (page 121)**

- Why is religious experience so important in the study of the philosophy of religion? What are the implications of claiming that it is a valuable way of knowing God?
- Why might it be claimed that experience of God renders argument unnecessary?
- What is meant by ‘the varieties of religious experience’?
- Do you agree that we must take seriously this form of experience: the sense of knowledge arising from inner conviction?
- What evidence may there be for the claim that certainty and conviction can be used to support the most ‘irrational and misguided things’?
- Is there evidence this may happen in religious belief and practice? What are the implications for religion if this is the case?
- Do you think Donovan’s examples of things we know by intuition are good ones? Give reasons for your answer. Do they offer a good analogy for religious intuition?
- What do you understand by ‘intuition’? What problems arise from the use of the term? Do you think intuition may be more reliable in some cases than others?
- Identify at least two scholars who would support the claim that religious experience offers good grounds to know God exists, and two who would argue against the view. Explain their arguments.
- What are the implications for atheism if God can be known through intuition?
- How would A.J. Ayer respond to Donovan’s proposal?

**Knowledge from intuition (pages 121–2)**

- How would Ayer respond to those philosophers who have maintained that religious experience is a source of religious knowledge?
- What problems may be raised by the claim that God is ‘known through finite things’? Is there a possible contradiction involved in this?
- Why, on the other hand, may religious experience be the only way in which humans could experience God?
- What does it mean to say that God’s reality ‘is not arrived at merely as the conclusion of an argument based upon them?’ How does this show the ways in which an argument from religious experience differs from other arguments for the existence of God?

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- Set out the argument from intuition in premises and a conclusion (paragraph 6, page 121). What are the philosophical weaknesses of this argument?
- Why might it be argued that intuition is the only means we have of knowing God?
- Explain how H.P. Owen outlines the similarity between intuitive knowledge of other people and intuitive knowledge of God.
- What does Donovan mean by ‘mediated immediacy’? Why is this intuitive knowledge of God not ‘the product of reasoning or inference’? Can we know anything of God by use of reason? Name any scholars who would suggest that we can. How might Westphal’s article help explain the place of reason in religion?
- Donovan claims that the intellect has a role to play in understanding the experience. Explain how this may be the case, and the problems which may arise from this idea.
- Suggest ways in which ‘the sense of God’s reality’ may be produced by (i) beauty and order in nature, (ii) scripture, (iii) liturgy, (iv) personal experience. Do you think that any of these ways are more persuasive than others?
- What are the implications of Owen’s argument for (i) human experience and (ii) religion?

**Faith (pages 122–3)**

- What is the significance of Donovan’s claim that ‘the idea of knowing God by intuition through religious experience is an attractive one for Christians’?
- Is this true? What implications may this view have for different groups of Christians? Would they all agree with the claim?
- Do you agree that it is ‘quite consistent with the teachings of the Bible’? Give reasons for your answer.
- Outline one example of a biblical religious experience you could use to illustrate this point.
- How does Baillie distinguish between knowledge of God through experience of natural objects and ‘natural theology’?
- Explain what is meant by ‘faith’. Do you think that faith and intuition are one and the same?
- What do you understand by ‘revelation’? Do you think this is a meaningful concept? Can we know things other than God by revelation? How does Westphal’s article help us to understand the place of revelation in religion?
- Do you agree that ‘the proper response to revelation is...faith’? What might we have to take into account before we could make that response? What are the implications of this claim for religious believers?

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- What are the implications of the claim that for the person who has a living awareness of God ‘it requires no further argument or support’?

**Feeling certain and being right (page 123–5)**

- Do you agree that there is a ‘fatal weakness’ in relying on intuition as a way of knowing God? Give reasons for your answer.
- Explain the distinction between rational certainty and psychological certainty?
- Why do you think that certainty is ‘a much disputed notion in philosophy’?
- Do you think that Donovan’s example of feeling certain about the time is a good illustration of the notion of ‘feeling certain without being right’? Suggest some alternative examples.
- What are the implications for religion *and* human experience of being aware that when we feel certain we may not always be right? Show how these implications may be more or less significant.
- Do we tend to think our intuition is a ‘reliable sign of being right’? Under what circumstances would we challenge this view?
- What does Donovan mean when he says that we cannot allow intuition to check intuition? Under what circumstances are we more likely to check the feelings our intuition provokes?
- Do you think that Russell’s analogy of two people being in love is a helpful illustration of what it means to intuit other minds? Give reasons for your answer.
- Why does Donovan suggest that words such as ‘awareness’, ‘encounter’, ‘apprehension’ or ‘response’ are used by people reporting religious experience? What is the ‘very question’ that they assume has been answered? What implications arise from this for those who claim to have had a religious experience?
- Do you think that we are better positioned to trust our intuition regarding other people’s minds than we are intuitions regarding gardening or archeology? Give reasons for your answer. Is Donovan implying that intuitions of God fall more into the second category?
- Do you think that Donovan is justified in putting fortune-telling alongside investment or gardening in his list?
- How well has Donovan used these examples to illustrate the problem arising from religious intuition?
- What implications arise from the observation that religious diversity makes intuition less reliable still?
- Donovan suggests that there is far more to belief in God than intuition. What does he suggest adds to it to make up the ‘religious life as a whole’?

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**The sense of knowing God (page 128)**

- What is the significance of Donovan’s claim that ‘Awareness of God ... is vital for religious belief’?
- Do you think that the problems raised by religious experience should not lead to a rejection of its claims? Give reasons for your answer.
- What observation does Donovan make about ‘a fair number of modern philosophers’? Why does he think this is important? Compare the opening lines of Ayer’s article. What does he say about philosophers?
- What is the key problem which Donovan suggests remains about religious experience? Is this a reasonable conclusion to draw? Does it identify the heart of the problem of religious experience? Give reasons for your answer.
- Do you agree with Donovan’s final conclusion? Give reasons for your answer,
- What are the implications arising if (i) we agree with Donovan and (ii) if we disagree?

**A brief overview of the structure of Donovan’s argument**

- (i) Donovan’s key idea – ‘experience of God’ does not amount to knowledge of God.
- (ii) An argument against this key idea is the claim that some know God by intuition which requires no further argument or support. But Donovan argues that ‘feeling certain’ is not the same as ‘being right’.
- (iii) A further argument against Donovan’s thesis is that God may be known by immediate ‘encounter’. He puts forward three criticisms against the trustworthiness of experience of God via ‘encounter’:
  - the sense of encounter may be mistaken
  - having ‘experience of’ depends on ‘knowledge about’
  - ‘experience of’ is not the same as ‘knowledge about’.
- (iv) His conclusion is that an ‘experience of God’ is not a form of knowledge of God. However, religious experience may continue to be of philosophical interest.

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### Consolidation exercises

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1. Write a paragraph on the argument from religious experience which you could use in a response to any extract from Donovan.
2. Write a paragraph which you could apply to a response to any exam passage from Donovan supporting the claim that knowledge of God arising from intuition is both useful and reliable *and* a paragraph refuting that claim.
3. Write two short paragraphs, analysing two religious experiences, which provide good material to which you can apply the arguments raised in the article. Make sure you can adapt them to apply to any extract from Donovan’s article.
4. Go through the articles by Ayer and Donovan side by side and identify arguments and ideas which are connected. Practice writing clear sentences in which you make the link between the ideas in the passages. Check that you can apply them to more than one extract from Donovan. Go back to Ayer and check where you could refer to Donovan in a response to extracts from Ayer’s passage.
5. Imagine that the *whole* of this passage were the basis of the examination question (which would never happen!) and write an examination-style response which explores the key ideas of the *whole* passage and discusses the implications of these ideas with reference to the *whole* passage.
6. Using your notes on religious experience for A2, Unit 3: Developments, identify the passages from Donovan’s text which can be supported or illustrated by material from those notes. Write these links down in a way that will help you remember how to connect them to the passage.
7. Write a paragraph explaining why religious experience is said to be so central to the Christian tradition. Follow this with a paragraph arguing against this view – i.e. that there are other aspects of Christian belief and practice which are more important, or even that experience is not important at all.
8. Prepare a paragraph which explains how a logical positivist position would address claims, made towards the end of Donovan’s article, about the value of religious experience.
9. Look at the work you did on the Alister Hardy research unit and Persinger’s Helmet when studying Ayer’s article (question 6 on page 16), and work out how you can apply this to your work on Donovan. Practice using it in responses to different sections of Donovan’s passage.

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**Donovan: ‘Can we know God by experience?’ – Worksheet activities**

Explain the key points of the following sections.

<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Knowledge from intuition</b>	

<b>Feeling certain and being right</b>	
<b>Faith</b>	

<p><b>'Knowledge about' and 'experience of'</b></p>	
<p><b>The sense of knowing God</b></p>	

What is the conclusion that Donovan reaches in the final paragraphs? Is it balanced and fair and supported by evidence?

Which aspects of Donovan's arguments are facts and which are his opinions OR the opinions of others?

<b>Facts</b>	<i>e.g. 'A number of mid-twentieth-century theologians and philosophers maintained ... that religious experience is a source of religious knowledge.'</i>	What evidence supports these facts?	What evidence may be used to counter these facts?

<b>Opinions</b>	e.g. <i>'The philosopher does not demand objective, scientific knowledge of God ...'</i>	What support may be given to Donovan's opinions?	What challenges may be made to these opinions?
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What other material from your AS and A2 studies (including all subjects) can you use in your answer to support and/or oppose Donovan's interpretation?

What scholars and quotations can you utilise in your answer that are not directly alluded to in this passage?

Is there anything you can use from the Bible and/or other religious texts?

Which claims/observations of Donovan do you support and why?

Which claims of Donovan do you challenge and why?

If Donovan's observations are right, then what are the implications for:

(i) Believers and non-believers in God?

(ii) Those who have had a religious experience?

(iii) Our understanding of how we can be certain about matters?

If Donovan's observations are wrong, then what are the implications for:

(i) Believers and non-believers in God?

(ii) Those who have had a religious experience?

iii) Our understanding of how we can be certain about matters?



What do you think is the strongest aspect of Donovan's interpretation? What is the weakest?

Taking everything into account, do you agree or disagree with the conclusions drawn at different stages of Donovan's article? Give your reasons.



## Overview

### Introduction (page 129)

- Philosophical theology and the philosophy of religion appear to have different subject matters and represent the shift in thinking from the time of Hume and Kant to that of Nietzsche, when philosophising about religion took centre stage at the expense of talking about God.
- Hegel drew attention to this shift in thinking and Westphal observes that philosophy of religion has now superseded philosophical theology.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you understand the distinction between these two notions and can offer some examples of areas of discussion which come under each heading.*

### Pre-Kantian philosophical theology (pages 129–30)

- Philosophical theology was represented by two forms, scholastic and deist, both of which are concerned with establishing the existence and nature of God by means of reason unaided by revelation.
- Scholasticism, however, allowed that reason, faith, revelation and authority could work harmoniously together. Deists looked to separate faith and reason by distinguishing between the 'kernel' and 'husk' of religion.
- Westphal suggests examples of kernel as including God as creator, and husk as anything miraculous.
- Deism emerged in the Enlightenment, from a desire to define a religion which would foster moral unity in society. This would require the rejection of special revelation which made religion particular to the Church that held it as authoritative.
- The deists were confident that unaided human reason could yield all that could be known about God, and aimed to distinguish good religion from bad: hence the shift to talking about religion rather than God. Their focus was less to prove the existence of God and more to make religion an ally of morality.
- The work of Hume and Kant was integral to this, striking a devastating blow to the classical arguments for the existence of God and forcing new directions for philosophy.

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Check that:

- ✓ you understand and can define the terms scholastic and deist
- ✓ you understand the concepts of kernel and husk
- ✓ you understand something of the concerns arising in the enlightenment period
- ✓ you can discuss something of the work of Hume and Kant.

**Post-Kantian reconstructions of the deist project (pages 130–2)**

- Kant was the first to offer a reconstruction of the deist project, arguing that we can have knowledge of God by use of reason alone.
- Such rational religion was acceptable in the cause of universal morality. Religion was not essential to morality, but could be useful to the moral life.
- Universal religion could not, however, be founded on duties to God.
- The doctrines of the Church would now also be given a rational, ethical foundation, independent even of historical facts.
- Schleiermacher rejected the moral rigours of Kantian religion and identified the kernel of religion to be found in a deep unity of feeling with God, contemplated as the Infinite and Eternal, but still clothed in particular ideas and practices, although these are no guarantee of true religion.
- Hegel rejected both Kant’s and Schleiermacher’s understandings of religion and proposed the view that religion and philosophy are the same, but only philosophy can claim the conceptual form which is necessary to gain true knowledge – in particular, a philosophical understanding of the concepts of Idea and Spirit.
- Hegel identifies the Spirit to the highest category, avoiding Spinoza’s presentation of God or Nature and speaking instead of God or Spirit.
- Religion elevates the finite spirit to the infinite, which becomes the focus of self-awareness, and this process happens most fully in Christianity through the aid of philosophy. Philosophy enables human reason to fully manifest the full nature of God and the central truth of Christianity is the Incarnation.

Check that:

- ✓ you understand Kant’s interpretation of religion based on universal reason. This is the most accessible idea in these paragraphs and it is worth grasping.
- ✓ you understand how Schleiermacher understands religion as feeling – this idea is also accessible and your study of religious experience may help you here.

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**Hume and the hermeneutics of suspicion (pages 132–3)**

- Modern philosophy of religion took a new approach to solving the problems of religion. Rather than attempting to define a new religion which was more acceptable to a modern age, the followers of Hume aimed to establish how far the problems of religion lay in its disposable husks.
- This led to a new suspicion of religion. Whilst scepticism questions the evidence which supports religious beliefs, suspicion of religion arises from questioning what motives underlie religion and what functions religion may serve.
- Hume had suggested that the function of religion was a flattery of the gods, which was motivated by the believer’s own hopes and fears.
- The thinking of Marx and Nietzsche shifted the focus to psychology and sociology. Marx explored the way in which religious ideas encouraged repression and legitimised social exclusivity. Nietzsche argued that religion was rooted in slave morality, creating a false moral superiority.
- Kierkegaard too challenged the ideological grounds which had reduced Christianity to being the key to respectable living.

*Check that:*

- ✓ *you understand the distinct concepts of scepticism and suspicion of religion*
- ✓ *you understand the contributions made by Marx and Nietzsche to this suspicious approach.*

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### Questions to consider

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#### Introduction (page 129)

- Explain how Westphal understands philosophical theology and the philosophy of religion. Give examples to illustrate your explanation.
- What different motivations may underlie making God or religion the primary subject matter of discussion?
- What are the implications of these two different areas of concern for (i) the believer; (ii) the philosopher and (iii) the non-believer?
- Identify the key ideas associated with Hume, Kant and Nietzsche which you have already learned from your studies.
- Identify one (or more) further key idea(s) associated with these thinkers which you have researched or learned about since starting to study this passage.
- Do you agree that ‘we do not know God’? Give reasons for your answer.
- What are the implications of this claim (i) for believers; (ii) for non-believers?
- Do you agree that we can speak only of religion and not of God? If so, how has this come to be the case?
- How does the teaching of the Bible (or other sacred texts) offer support or present a challenge to this view?
- Identify one or more philosopher/s who would agree with this claim and one or more who would disagree. Explain their arguments.
- Do you think we hear more talk today about religion than we do about God? If so, who or what may be responsible for this?
- Is talk about religion today based on a sound understanding of religion? Does this derive from a sound understanding of God?
- What are the implications of focusing on religion over and above God? Do you think this is likely to lead to a productive discussion?
- Do you agree that ‘talking about religion cannot so easily be separated from talking about God’? Identify any problems which arise from attempting to do so.
- What do you think Westphal means when he suggests that when philosophical theology returns ‘it will call itself the philosophy of religion’?

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**Pre-Kantian philosophical theology (pages 129–30)**

- Explain the difference between the scholastic and the deist approaches to philosophical theology.
- Identify arguments, interpretations and ideas you have already studied which offer illustrations of these approaches.
- Do you agree that reason and faith can be ‘harmonious’? Give reasons for your answer.
- What are the implications of agreeing with this view, and of disagreeing with it? Remember to clarify for whom/what these are implications.
- Explain, with examples, what Westphal means by ‘kernel’ and ‘husk’.
- Do you think Westphal has made good choices to illustrate these concepts? Give reasons for your answer.
- Suggest alternative examples and why these may, or may not, work better.
- What we may decide are kernel and husk has tremendous implications for religion and religious believers. Explain why this is so. This is a very significant issue, so be prepared to think and write about it at some length.
- In what ways may deism be considered to be ‘the religion of the Enlightenment’?
- What do you understand by ‘the universality of reason’?
- For what reasons did the rationalists attempt to limit religion to rational grounds?
- What are the advantages and the dangers of rejecting the place of special revelation in religion? Use examples to illustrate your answer. What are the implications of this rejection?
- Why did the Enlightenment thinkers seek to ‘deny the Church epistemic and political authority’?
- Is it possible to distinguish between ‘good religion’ and ‘bad religion’? How might this be done? Is this just a subjective distinction?
- Why might religion be seen to be ‘the enemy of morality’? Identify one or more scholars who would agree with this view, and one or more who would oppose it.
- What are the implications for religion *and* human experience of separating morality from religion?
- Do you think that the critiques of classical arguments for the existence of God offered by Hume and Kant are decisive?
- What are the implications of laying aside those arguments? What direction can philosophy of religion take once the classical arguments are undermined?

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**Post-Kantian reconstructions of the deist project (pages 130–2)**

- Explain how you understand Kant’s distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘practical’ reason.
- What value does Kant suggest lies in a religion ‘grounded in universal reason and in the service of universal morality’? Does such a religion exist, or could it exist?
- What would be the implications for religion of achieving this aim?
- Do you agree that morality does not need religion? Give reasons for your answer.
- What are the implications for human experience of morality without religion?
- Why, then, does Kant argue that morality leads to religion? Is this true? Give reasons for your answer.
- Explain Kant’s moral argument for the existence of God and immortality.
- What does it mean to say that religion ‘is the recognition of all duties as divine commands’? How does it therefore, ‘aid ... the moral life’?
- Identify one or more scholars who would disagree with this claim, and explain why.
- Do you agree that a universal religion could propose no special duties to God?
- What are the implications for religion of the rejection of sacraments and religious practices as ‘fetish faith’?
- What does it mean to speak of God as a ‘means towards human morality’? What are the problems raised by this view?
- Why does Schleiermacher see morality as part of the husk of religion? Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
- What are the implications for religion of finding the kernel of religion in feeling?
- Is Schleiermacher a mystic?
- How would A.J. Ayer respond to Schleiermacher’s understanding of religion and the Church?
- Is Schleiermacher appealing to intuitive knowledge of God?
- What does Schleiermacher mean by proposing that the universal kernel of religious feeling needs to be clothed in ‘particular ideas and practices’?
- Is this important for the status and value of religious belief?
- How does Hegel distinguish between religion and philosophy? Do you agree with this distinction? Give reasons for your answer.
- What is pantheism? Why is Hegel’s understanding of religion not pantheistic?

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- Why is it suggested that Christianity is the ‘consummate religion’?
- What are the implications for religion of this claim?

**Hume and the hermeneutics of suspicion (pages 132–3)**

- For what reasons may there be a ‘deep dissatisfaction with historical Christianity’?
- What does it mean to ask if the problem of religion may lie at its heart rather than in the disposable husks?
- Explain, with examples, Westphal’s distinction between scepticism and suspicion.
- Identify at least one modern thinker who represents the suspicious perspective on religion and outline their views.
- What is ‘instrumental religion’?
- Why does ‘the piety of self-interest immediately give(s) rise to self-deception’?
- What does it mean to speak of a functionalist approach to understanding religion?
- Do you agree that religion serves to ‘legitimise structures of social domination’?
- What are the implications for religion *and* human experience if this is true?
- Is Marx’s understanding of the function of religion fair?
- What does it mean to say ‘what higher justification could a social order receive than to be divinely ordained’? Give examples to illustrate this claim.
- In what circumstances may it be true to say that ‘religion is a matter of social privilege’?
- In what circumstances may it be true to say that the oppressed seek consolation in religion?
- What implications for religion *and* human experience may arise from these views?
- Explain Nietzsche’s understanding of the function of religion, as suggested by Westphal.
- Do you agree that religion encourages moral superiority? Give reasons for your answer. If so, what problems arise from this? In what ways have Christians attempted to deal with these problems?
- Give an example of a Christian group or thinker who may appear to support the view that ‘Divine perfection is defined as the one who will punish our enemies’.
- What do you think it means to ‘[equate] the present social order with the kingdom of God’? From your reading of this passage why do you think Kierkegaard challenged this view?
- Is it possible for a Christian to be suspicious of Christianity? Give reasons for your answer.
- What are the implications of such suspicion? Can it be useful or is it inherently undermining?

*Notes*

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**Consolidation exercises**

1. Prepare a paragraph which outlines the ways in which the work of Hume and Kant struck a 'devastating blow' to the classical proofs for the existence of God.
2. Prepare a paragraph explaining Kant's moral argument for the existence of God and immortality.
3. Write a paragraph explaining the possible relationship(s) between faith and reason. Make sure you know to which sections of Westphal's article you would apply it and how.
4. Write a paragraph explaining (i) a sociological critique of religion; (ii) a psychological critique of religion; (iii) a moral critique of religion. Identify where you could apply it in response to one or more passages from Westphal's article.
5. Prepare a paragraph outlining the direction in which you think philosophy of religion is likely to go in the future. Does the work of modern anti-theists such as Dawkins and Hitchens pick up where Marx and Nietzsche left off?
6. Have a look at Richard Swinburne's arguments in his book *Is there a God?* (OUP). Do you think he would agree that arguments for the existence of God no longer have a place in the philosophy of religion?

*Notes*

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**Westphal: The emergence of modern philosophy – Worksheet activities**

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Explain the key points of the following sections.

<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Pre-Kantian philosophical theology</b>	

<p><b>Post-Kantian reconstructions of the deist project</b></p>	
<p><b>Hume and the hermeneutics of suspicion</b></p>	

What is the conclusion that Westphal reaches in the final paragraph? Is it balanced and fair and supported by evidence?

Which aspects of Westphal's arguments are facts and which are his opinions OR the opinions of others?

<b>Facts</b>	<i>e.g. 'The deistic versions ... wish to bring religion ... "within the limits of reason alone".'</i>	What evidence supports these facts?	What evidence may be used to counter these facts?

<b>Opinions</b>	<i>e.g. '... talking about religion cannot so easily be separated from talking about God'.</i>	What support may be given to Westphal's opinions?	What challenges may be made to these opinions?
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What other material from your AS and A2 studies (including all subjects) can you use in your answer to support and/or oppose Westphal's interpretation?

What scholars and quotations can you utilise in your answer that are not directly alluded to in this passage?

Is there anything you can use from the Bible and/or other religious texts?

Which claims/observations of Westphal do you support and why?

Which claims of Westphal do you challenge and why?

If Westphal's observations are right, then what are the implications for:

(i) Believers and non-believers in God?

(ii) Those who would study philosophy of religion?

(iii) The study of religion?

Is it possible for Westphal's interpretation to be wrong? If so, what are the implications for:

(i) Believers and non-believers in God?

(ii) Those who would study philosophy of religion?

(iii) The study of religion?



What do you think is the strongest aspect of Westphal's interpretation? What is the weakest?

Taking everything into account, do you agree or disagree with the conclusions drawn at different stages of Westphal's article? Give your reasons.

## End-of-unit quick quiz

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Try to answer these questions without looking at the passages.

### Ayer

1. What is the significance for understanding Ayer's argument of his belonging to the school of Logical Positivism?
2. How does he assess the value of atheist and agnostic claims?
3. What are the implications if God is the 'object of a purely mystical intuition'?
4. Why does Ayer believe that the claim 'There exists transcendent God' has 'no literal significance'?
5. Why does Ayer believe that the argument from religious experience is 'utterly fallacious'?
6. What are the implications of (i) agreeing and (ii) disagreeing with this claim?
7. Name two scholars who would AGREE with Ayer and two who would DISAGREE. Briefly explain their arguments.

8. Why does Ayer claim that there is no moral knowledge?
9. What are the implications of this position?
10. Has Ayer successfully undermined theism and atheism? Why/why not?

**Donovan**

1. How does Donovan understand intuition?
2. How does H P Owen explain how intuition of God arises?
3. What are the implications of relying on intuition to know God?
4. Why does Russell use the analogy of being in love to criticise intuitive knowledge of God?
5. Do you think this is a strong analogy? Why/why not?

6. Explain why different cases of knowing by intuition may differ.
7. What does Martin Buber understand as an I-Thou relationship?
8. Do you agree it is possible to have an I-Thou relationship with God? Why/why not?
9. What are the implications of God being personal?
10. Donovan claims: 'If a certain religious tradition holds that God is not to be thought of as an It, then it is up to the philosopher to respect that feature of the concept of God.' What arguments could be raised for and against this claim, and by whom?

### **Westphal**

1. Explain the difference between kernel and husk.
2. Why may it be harder than Westphal suggests to find examples of these?
3. Clarify the deism and scholasticism.

4. What are the implications of attempting to establish a universal religion?
5. Why did Enlightenment rationalists reject the validity of personal revelation?
6. What are the implications for religion of this rejection?
7. Why did Kant locate universal religion in morality?
8. What did Schleiermacher understand to be the heart of religion? Would Ayer and/or Donovan agree? Why/why not?
9. What is the difference between suspicion of religion and scepticism about religion?
10. What are the implications of questioning the function of religion?