

### SECTION C

Write your answer in the space provided.

Ayer  
via Negative  
Symbol  
LG

4 Evaluate the claim that religious language is meaningless.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Religion and Ethics
- New Testament Studies
- Study of a Religion.

(30)

Firstly, Ayer created the verification principle that was heavily influenced by the ideas of logical positivists and the Vienna Circle. The verification principle argues that in order for a statement to be true and have meaning it must be strongly verified by empirical evidence. However, Ayer quickly realised that this cuts out the verification of historical statements. So, Ayer then proposed weak verification in which a statement can be verified if it has "associated statements" to go along with it. Despite this improvement though, Ayer still believed that religious language was meaningless as it ~~could not be~~ cannot be verified strongly with empirical evidence, or weakly through associated statements. Therefore, according to Ayer's Verification Principle, religious language is meaningless. However, some people criticised Ayer and stated that if weak verification allows for the verification of historical statements through associated statements, it should allow for the verification of religious language. For example,

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we could use the New Testament in order to verify the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which if verified would give meaning to the religious language used in the Bible.

Furthermore, ~~another~~ another view of religious language comes from Wittgenstein's Language Games. Wittgenstein argued that when atheists and theists talk about God, they are both playing different language games, and so they cannot understand the meaning of the language they are using. This means that misunderstandings happen when people are not playing the same language game. Therefore, it can be seen that through Wittgenstein's argument, religious language can be meaningful, if it is understood correctly. This means that religious language is meaningless when it is used between ~~two~~ two different people with different religions or cultures because they do not understand the context and ~~mean~~ meaning in which the other person is using the same religious language.

Moreover, the concept of the Via ~~Negativa~~ Negativa can also be used to show that religious language is meaningless. The Via Negativa states that because we cannot understand God through positive terms, we can understand what God is not. However, while this argument could seem to state that religious language used to describe what God is not, it could also be used to show



that all religious language is meaningless. This is because God is supposed to be a transcendent, metaphysical being that human beings cannot understand. Therefore, any language used to describe God is meaningless because as humans we do not have a concept of what God is, so any language used to describe him is redundant.

~~Further to this, the~~ On the other hand, Tillich uses symbols in order to show that religious language is meaningful. Tillich argued that symbols point to something beyond itself, which can provide meaning to those to understand the significance of the symbol. For example, the cross holds great ~~mean~~ significance to Christians because they can understand the meaning behind the symbol, while non-Christians may not see this same meaning. ~~There~~ In addition, ~~and~~ a critique to Tillich's view is that symbols can have different meanings in different cultures, which means that they cannot be a universal use of religious language. Therefore, Tillich's symbol view can be used to suggest that ~~religion~~, like the language games, religious language has meaning only if it is understood correctly.

Further to this, the concept of morality within religion could also be used to demonstrate that religious



language is ~~meaning~~ meaningful. This is because moral codes that are a part of today's society originated within the Bible, such as Divine Command Theory or the decalogue. This demonstrates that religious language is meaningful as it shows that it must have meaning because majority of the world's morals and values are based on some form of religion, and so most people must be able to understand it. However, it could also be argued that the amount of ambiguity around ~~the~~ concepts such as 'love', suggest that religious language is meaningless. ~~as be~~ This is because as a result of this subjectivity, ~~the~~ religious language can have no meaning because there is too many different understandings of it for it to be meaningful.

In conclusion, the claim that religious language is meaningless is accurate to a certain extent. One view that supports this claim is Ayer's Verification Principle. This is because Ayer claims that religious language is meaningless because it cannot be verified strongly by empirical evidence, nor can it be verified weakly through associated statements. Furthermore, Wittgenstein exemplifies that religious language can only be meaningful if it is understood correctly by both parties using the same language. Moreover, the Via Negativa can show that religious language is meaningful in terms of that we can use it to understand what God is not, but can also be used



to show that religious language is meaningless in terms of ~~under~~ describing God because he is supposed to be transcendent and beyond human understanding. In addition, Tillich uses symbols to illustrate that religious language is meaningful to those who can understand the significance of it, but his view has been criticised by not being universal. Further to this, the concept of morality within religious language shows that religious language is meaningful because everyone can understand it as it has impacted the morals and values that we have in society today. However, this argument has also been criticised due to the subjectivity of the religious language within the Bible, which could render it meaningless due to the different interpretations.



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