

AQA RS PLC

Philosophy of Religion

Topic	Class notes	Revision notes	RAG
Arguments for the Existence of God			
The Design Argument			
• The basis of the argument in observation			
• Paley's analogical argument			
• Hume's criticisms			
• Strengths of the argument			
• Weaknesses of the argument			
• The Design Argument as 'proof' for God's existence			
• The value of the Design Argument for religious faith			
• The relationship between reason and faith			
The Cosmological Argument			
• The basis of the argument in observation			
• Aquinas' Way 3: contingency and necessity			
• Hume's criticisms			
• Russell's criticisms			
• Strengths of the argument			
• Weaknesses of the argument			
• The Cosmological Argument as 'proof' for God's existence			
• The value of the Cosmological for religious faith			
• The relationship between reason and faith			
The Ontological Argument			
• The basis of the argument in thought			
• Anselm's a priori argument			
• Gaunilo's criticisms			
• Kant's criticisms			
• Strengths of the argument			
• Weaknesses of the argument			
• The Ontological Argument as 'proof' for God's existence			
• The value of the Ontological for religious faith			
• The relationship between reason and faith			
Evil and Suffering			
• The concepts of natural and moral evil			
• The logical and evidential problem of evil			
• The relationship between philosophy and faith			
Responses to the problem of evil – Free Will Defence			
• Overview of the Free Will Defence			
• Mackie and the Free Will Defence			
• Plantinga and the Free Will Defence			

• Strengths of the Free Will Defence			
• Weaknesses of the Free Will Defence			
Responses to the problem of evil – Hick’s soul-making theodicy			
• Hick’s soul making theodicy			
• Strengths of Hick’s soul-making theodicy			
• Weaknesses of Hick’s soul-making theodicy			
Responses to the problem of evil – Griffin’s Process Theodicy			
• Griffin’s Process Theodicy			
• Strengths of Griffin’s Process Theodicy			
• Weaknesses of Griffin’s Process Theodicy			
Religious Experience			
• The influence of religious experiences and their value for religious faith			
The nature of religious experience – visions			
• Corporeal visions			
• Imaginative visions			
• Intellectual visions			
The nature of religious experience – Numinous experiences			
• Otto’s Numinous experiences as an apprehension of the wholly other			
The nature of religious experience – Mystical experiences			
• William James’ Mystical experiences			
• William Stace’s non sensuous and non-intellectual union with the divine			
Verifying religious experience			
• The challenges of verifying religious experiences			
• The challenges to religious experience from science			
• Religious responses to those challenges			
• Swinburne’s principles of credulity and testimony			
Religious Language			
Different views of religious language			
• Cognitive			
• Non-cognitive			
Challenging the meaningfulness of religious language – The Verification Principle			
• The Verification Principle			
• Strengths of the Verification Principle			
• Weaknesses of the Verification Principle			
Challenging the meaningfulness of religious language – The Falsification Principle			
• The Falsification Principle			
• Strengths of the Falsification Principle			
• Weaknesses of the Falsification Principle			
Responses to the challenges towards religious language – Eschatological Verification			
• Hick’s Eschatological verification			
• Strengths of Hick’s argument			
• Weaknesses of Hick’s argument			
Responses to the challenges towards religious language – Expression of a Blick			
• Hare’s language as an expression of a Blick			

• Strengths of Hare's theory of blik			
• Weaknesses of Hare's theory of Bliks			
Responses to the challenges towards religious language – Language game			
• Wittgenstein's and language games			
• Strengths of Wittgenstein's theory			
• Weaknesses of Wittgenstein's theory			
Other views of the nature of religious language – Symbol			
• Tillich - Religious language as symbolic			
• Strengths of religious language as symbolic			
• Weaknesses of religious language as symbolic			
Responses to the challenges towards religious language - Analogy			
• Aquinas - Religious language as analogical			
• Strengths of religious language as analogical			
• Weaknesses of religious language as analogical			
Responses to the challenges towards religious language – the Via Negativa			
• The Via Negativa			
• Strengths of Via Negativa			
• Weaknesses of Via Negativa			
Miracles			
Differing understandings of 'miracle'			
• Realist views of miracles			
• Anti-realist views of miracles			
• Violation of natural law			
• Natural event			
Hume and Wiles			
• Hume's critique of miracles			
• Wiles' critique of miracles			
• Comparison of Hume and Wiles			
Significance of these views for religion			
• Significance of Realist views for religion			
• Significance of Anti-Realist views for religion			
Self, death and the afterlife			
The nature and existence of the soul			
• Plato – dualism			
• Aristotle – monism			
Descartes argument for the existence of the soul			
• Descartes' argument			
• Problems with Descartes argument			
The body/soul relationship			
• Dualism: Plato's views			
• Dualism - Descartes' interactionism			
• Monism – hard materialism/physicalism			
• Dual aspect monism			
The possibility of continuing personal existence after death			
• Ideas about personal identity			
• Possibility of physical existence after death – hard			

materialist/physicalist view			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of physical existence after death – Hick's replica theory 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of physical existence after death – Christian beliefs about resurrection 			
The possibility of the existence after death of a conscious self			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato's arguments for the natural immortality of the soul 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price on disembodied souls 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swinburne's light-bulb argument 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reincarnation of the soul 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near-death experiences 			
The possibility of psychological continuity after death			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bundle theory 			
The view of Dual-aspect Monism			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective immortality with reference to Process Theology 			

Ethics

Topic	Class notes	Revision notes	RAG
Natural Moral Law			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquinas' Natural Moral Law 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of double effect 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportionalism 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths of Natural Moral Law 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaknesses of Natural Moral Law 			
Situation Ethics			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of Fletcher's Ethics 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fletcher's four presumptions 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fletcher's six working principles 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths of Situation Ethics 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaknesses of Situation Ethics 			
Virtue Ethics			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle's Virtue Ethics 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths of Virtue Ethics 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaknesses of Virtue Ethics 			
Application of Natural Moral Law, Situation Ethics and Virtue Ethics			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theft 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lying 			
Issues of human life and death			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embryo research 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloning 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Designer' babies 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abortion 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital punishment 			

Issues of non-human life and death			
• Use of animals as food – intensive farming			
• Use of animals in scientific procedures - cloning			
• Blood sports			
• Animals as a source of organs for transplants			
Introduction to Meta Ethics: the meaning of right and wrong			
Divine Command Theory			
• Outline of Divine Command Theory			
• Strengths of Divine Command Theory			
• Weaknesses of Divine Command Theory			
Naturalism: Utilitarianism			
• Naturalism			
• Bentham's Utilitarianism			
• Mill's Utilitarianism			
• Strengths of ethical naturalism			
• Weaknesses of ethical naturalism			
• Strengths of Utilitarianism			
• Weaknesses of Utilitarianism			
Non-naturalism: intuitionism			
• Non-naturalism			
• Outline of Moore's Intuitionism			
• Strengths of Intuitionism			
• Weaknesses of Intuitionism			
Free will and moral responsibility			
The conditions of moral responsibility			
• Free will			
• Understanding the difference between right and wrong			
The extent of moral responsibility			
• Hard determinism			
• Libertarianism			
• Compatibilism			
The relevance of moral responsibility to reward and punishment			
• Approaches to the treatment of crime			
• Consequences of moral responsibility theory for reward and punishment			
Conscience			
Non-religious ideas about the nature of conscience			
• Kohlberg			
• Freud			
• Durkheim			
• Fromm			
Religious ideas about the nature of conscience			
• Schleiermacher			
• Aquinas			
• Butler			
• Fletcher			

The value of conscience as a moral guide			
• The problem of defining conscience			
• Different understandings of conscience and their value as a guide			
Bentham and Kant			
Bentham's Act Utilitarianism			
• Outline of Bentham's Act Utilitarianism			
• Challenges to Bentham's Act Utilitarianism and responses			
Kant's Categorical Imperative			
• Outline of Kant's Categorical Imperative			
• Strengths of Kant's Categorical Imperative			
• Challenges of Kant's Categorical Imperative			
Comparison of Bentham and Kant			
• Comparison of the key ideas of Bentham and Kant about moral decision making			
How far the ethical theories of Bentham and Kant are consistent with Christian moral decision making			
• Where Bentham's views are compatible with Christian decision making			
• Where Bentham's views are not compatible with Christian decision making			
• Where Kant's views are compatible with Christian decision making			
• Where Kant's views are not compatible with Christian decision making			

Islam

Topic	Class notes	Revision notes	RAG
Sources of wisdom and authority			
The Qur'an			
• Its nature and authority			
• Muslim beliefs about the revelation and compilation of the Qur'an			
• The importance of the Arabic text and how this is reflected in the treatment and use of the Qur'an in worship and in everyday life			
• Translation as interpretation and the importance of trustworthy interpretation of the Qur'an.			
The Prophet			
• The status of Muhammad as Khatam an-Nabiyyin (seal of the Prophets) and his significance for Muslims today			
• Different views about the nature and value of hadiths as sources of knowledge of the sayings and actions of Muhammad.			

Imams			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The authority of the Imams in Shi'a Islam 			
God			
Tawhid			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Oneness of God 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> God as transcendent and indescribable, the omnipotent creator and controller of all things 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching about God in the Throne verse: 2:255. 			
Personal aspects of God			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The significance of 'The Merciful' and 'The Compassionate' as Names of God 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different Muslim views about how anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qur'an should be interpreted. Ashari, Hanbali and Mutazili views, with particular reference to the hand of God and the face of God. 			
Aspects of the Sufi concept of God			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> God as incomparable and unknowable in Himself 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation as emanation and God as immanent 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The soul as one with God 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufi understandings of the teaching about God in the verse of Light: 24:35. 			
Self, death and afterlife			
The purpose of life			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslim views about the purpose of life as being to worship God and a moral test 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of worship and consideration of the view that, for Muslims, this life is only important as a preparation for the life to come. 			
Al Qadr			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different understandings of the relationship between divine control, human freedom and responsibility. Mutazili and Ashari perspectives and the Shi'a concept of Bada. 			
Akhirah (afterlife)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of soul 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beliefs about Barzakh, judgement heaven and hell including different understandings of resurrection and of the descriptions of heaven and hell in the Qur'an including 47:15. 			
Good conduct and key moral principles			
Good conduct			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of good moral conduct in Islam including reference to the duty of obedience to God and the Prophet and to the greater jihad 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of personal freedom and judgement in the Shari'ah law, with reference to the five-fold classification of actions. 			

The sanctity of life			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of the sanctity of life and its application to issues concerning the embryo and the unborn child 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesser jihad as a duty of the Ummah and how it applied to warfare at the time of the Prophet 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debates about its application today, including to the use of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. 			
Stewardship			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of the Ummah as Khalifah (stewards) and their responsibilities towards the environment and to animal life 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How changing understandings of the impact of human activities on the world change Muslim understandings of their responsibilities. 			
Expressions of religious identity			
The concept of Muslim			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The similarities and differences between Shi'a and Sunni views about what it means to be a Muslim. 			
The Pillars of Islam			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of pillar and purpose of the five pillars of Islam; 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salah: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differences in Sunni and Shi'a practices The importance of the outward actions of prayer and the underlying intentions and state of mind The importance of daily and Jummah prayers 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developments in the practice of Hajj in the 20th century and the significance and importance of Hajj today. 			
The mosque			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing role of the mosque in the community, with particular reference to the history and developing work of the London Central Mosque. 			
Islam, gender and sexuality			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical and social factors that have influenced developments in Muslim thinking about these issues including: encounter with western values and lifestyles as part of the British Empire and through later immigration into Britain 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing roles of men and women in society outside of religion; the rights given to women by secular governments. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developments in Muslim thought, including feminist approaches: 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The veil seen as a barrier to achievement in Qasim Amin's work in 1899 and other Muslim views on this issue. ○ Debates about the role and status of women in Islam with particular reference to the interpretation of 4:34 and the views of Amina Wadud. ○ Contemporary Muslim views about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Celibacy ▪ Marriage ▪ Homosexuality and transgender issues. 			
Islam and science			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How and why science has influenced Islam and how Islam has responded, with particular reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Science's emphasis on evidence and reason ○ Specific scientific discoveries ○ Science as a stimulus to Muslim ethical thinking 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developments in Muslim thought <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How science has challenged Muslim belief and different Muslim responses to Darwin's theory of evolution and the Big Bang theory. ○ The importance of science in early Muslim thought: science as a duty required by the Qur'an. The belief that the Qur'an revealed what science later confirmed with reference to the work of Maurice Bucaille. ○ Different Muslim responses to ethical issues raised by science: genetic engineering. 			
Islam and the challenge of secularisation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges of secularisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The replacement of religion as the source of truth and moral values ○ Relegation of religion to the personal sphere ○ The rise of militant atheism: the view that religion is irrational. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developments in Muslim thought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responses to materialistic secular values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the value of wealth and possessions and the debate about capital punishment ▪ comparison of the significant ideas of Tariq Ramadan and Sheikh Ahmad Ash-Sharabasi concerning capital punishment. 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emphasis on the preservation of Muslim identity with reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dress ▪ Diet ▪ Prayer places of worship ▪ The self-reliance of the Muslim community ▪ Different attitudes to democracy and to involvement in the democratic process. ○ Emphasis on the social relevance of Islam, liberationist approaches supporting the poor and defending the oppressed. 			
Islam, migration and religious pluralism			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How migration has created multicultural societies which include Islam, with particular reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Migration by Muslims into the United Kingdom from the 1950s onwards ○ The diversity within the Muslim community in Britain ○ Freedom of religion as a human right in European law and religious pluralism as a feature of modern secular states ○ The influence of this context on Muslim thought. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in Muslim thought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emphasis on exclusivism; its basis in the Qur'an, 3:85; attitudes within Islam to minority Muslim groups. ○ Inclusivism and its basis in the Qur'an with reference to both Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic faiths; the debate about whether good deeds without faith in God or Islam are rewarded by God. ○ Muslim responses to issues of freedom of religious expression in society. 			

Islam and Dialogues

Topic	Class notes	Revision notes	RAG
The dialogue between Islam and philosophy			
Beliefs and teachings			
• God			
• Self, death and afterlife			
• Sources of wisdom and authority			
• Religious experience			
• The relationship between scientific and religious discourses			

• The truth claims of other religions			
• Miracles			
Issues and the impact of the discussion on religious belief past and present			
• How far the belief is reasonable – that is based on reason and/or consistent with reason.			
• How meaningful the statements of faith are, and for whom.			
• How coherent the beliefs are, and how consistent with other beliefs within the belief system.			
• The relevance of philosophical enquiry for religious faith, with particular reference to the debate about the nature of faith as ‘belief in’ or ‘belief that’.			
The dialogue between Islam and ethics			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslim responses to the following approaches to moral decision making in the light of key Muslim moral principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deontological, with reference to Kant teleological and consequential, with reference to Bentham character based, with reference to virtue ethics. 			
• How far Muslim ethics can be considered to be deontological, teleological, consequential, or character based.			
• Muslim response to: the issues of human life and death and issues of animal life and death prescribed for study; theft and lying; marriage; homosexuality and transgender issues; genetic engineering including.			
• Muslim responses to issues surrounding wealth, tolerance and freedom of religious expression.			
• Muslim understandings of free will and moral responsibility, and the value of conscience in Muslim moral decision-making.			
The impact of other ethical perspectives and ethical studies on Muslim views about these issues, both past and present			
• Challenges to and support for Muslim views; compatibility of Muslim views with those of other ethical perspectives			
• The relative strengths and weaknesses of Muslim perspectives and the other ethical perspectives studied on these issues			
• The implications of criticisms of Muslim ethical teaching for the religion as a whole and its sources of authority.			

