

## **RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE (PART 2) PART B REVISION**

Make a list below of everything that you know you need to learn for part B questions on the second are of 'Religious Language'

**B) Symbolic language can be agreed as having adequate meaning as a form of language. (30)**

**Draft Mark scheme:**

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

## **B) Symbolic language can be agreed as having adequate meaning as a form of language. (30)**

### **Agree:**

- Understanding language non-cognitively allows to move beyond a literalistic and empirical interpretation
- Understanding language non-cognitively allows feelings and emotions to be taken into consideration, similar to Otto's numinous concept
- Symbols provide a common focal point for a community to centre around, as supported by Randall
- Symbols are capable of 'opening up new levels of reality', as they point beyond themselves
- Symbols open up dimensions of the soul, which correspond to the dimensions of reality
- Symbols possess a very real and meaningful quality that operates on a far deeper level than empirical, scientific language would and therefore can provide adequate meaning.
- Symbolic language is unassailable in terms of levels of meaning that it can bring to those who engage with it—the interaction and social engagements that occur as a result of it are undeniable
- Emile Durkheim and Carl Jung recognised the significant value that symbols have within human culture, as a means of providing identity and meaning

### **Disagree:**

- Tillich recognised himself that 'symbols grow and die' - therefore, symbols do not provide constant and consistent meaning
- Symbols are inextricably linked with cultural norms - as these change, so do the meaning of symbols: (use egs from text book here)
- We need to use caution when trying to read into civilisations that have long passed, so the adequacy of symbols can be questioned.
- In the 21st century, there is a quest for meaning via the employment of scientific methods is de rigueur—the use of symbolic language seems oddly archaic—it does not fit with that which can be tested. (verification and falsification)
- Symbols are sensitive to cultural referencing, therefore meaning that different culture can simply treat them in entirely different ways. E.g Swastika. If such a symbol has such diverse meaning, how they can they provide reliable meaning?
- If the word 'God' should be treated as a symbolic word, doesn't this raise philosophical problems? Does it represent an objective reality that can be spoken about empirically? Is Randall's concept of God nothing more than a human idea?
- Rational thinking would dismiss symbols as being flights of fancy that entertain at best, but distract people from the true meaning—they promote navel-grazing activities.

B) Assess the extent to which the works of Randall and Tillich provide a suitable counter-challenge to logical positivism. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

## B) Assess the extent to which the works of Randall and Tillich provide a suitable counter-challenge to logical positivism. (30)

### Draft Mark scheme:

#### High Extent:

- Tillich/Randall argued language should be viewed non-cognitively, and is not something that can be held up to objective scrutiny—it expresses emotions and opinions, attitudes and feelings.
- Religious language is a language which relates to a person's view of what reality might mean to them
- Randall argued that religious language was a vehicle for conveying knowledge—he believed it gave insight into commonly held beliefs, ideas and cultural identities.
- Randall stated, "If the function of religious beliefs is not to generate knowledge, then what is their function?"
- Randall stated symbols resulted in unifying people together, giving people an identity.
- Randall: Symbols provided a sense of communicating a shared set of values.
- Tillich: Symbols pointed beyond themselves, and participated to which they pointed to e.g a crucifix
- Tillich: Symbols opened up new levels of reality
- Tillich: Symbolic language is the 'Language of the soul' and meaningful at the deepest level possible for a human being.

#### Low Extent:

- Logical positivists proposed a rigid criteria for meaning, that was based on the ability to verify a statement—it fits comfortably with the empirical world of physical sciences and there is regarded as a test for meaning.
- Symbols can become outdated
- Logical Positivists save wasted time speaking about God
- Analytic and Synthetic, along with mathematical and tautological statements were all regarded as meaningful yet anything that fell outside of these were not meaningful.
- Logical positivists used cognitive language - it is factual in nature and can be shown to be true or false by objective means, through verification & falsification.

B) Assess the effectiveness of the terms non-cognitive, analogical and mythical as solutions to the problems of religious language. (30)

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## B) Assess the effectiveness of the terms non-cognitive, analogical and mythical as solutions to the problems of religious language. (30)

### High Effect:

- Effective for religious believers—there is no issue with the language for them
- Words ascribed to God are meaningful to them in terms of their devotion, worship, prayer or inner thoughts
- To treat language purely as cognitive, is a very narrow view of the function of language. Statements such as 'I feel happy today' cannot be objectively verified or falsified, but yet have value and meaning and reveal information.
- Non-cognitive language is used to convey emotions, feelings and attitudes - it is not used to express empirical ideas or state objective truths.
- Non-cognitive language gives human existence its richness and depth—a purely cognitive approach to language would remove the ability to express emotions.
- Meaningfulness can come from more than one form of expression, not just objective forms of expression
- Analogy: communicate complex ideas, in a less complicated way—making sense of information otherwise close to use
- Analogy: Allows us insight into God's character
- Mythical: permits insights into universal truths about existence and humankind's relationship with the universe
- Mythical: Are not taken literally - the symbolism and metaphors help convey meaning
- The hero myths, often display many virtues such as justice which is similar to Aristotle's virtue theory

### Low Effect:

- For those outside of religion, or those looking to apply critiques within religion, the language of religion is not problem free.
- Words are abstract, vague or ambiguous. For example, what does it really mean by 'Holy Spirit'?
- Religious words are not easily defined, as there is no physical external object to which they relate.
- For logical positivists, religious language belongs to a metaphysical era, which cannot be verified or falsified and therefore meaningless.
- Non-cognitive approaches are not making statements about any kinds of reality that could be objective. E.g. 'God exists' or 'I believe in life after death'
- Religious statements are neither analytic or synthetic
- Analogy: Hume argues analogy is only good for two things that are similar being compared.—but, do we really know what we mean when we use the word 'God'? If we do not, then the analogy fails.
- Mythical: myths can be interpreted in many different ways—so, meaning can be unclear
- The meaning of religious language can not be agreed upon universally - the laws of science and empiricism can

B) Religious language issues in the 21st century are relevant.

(30)

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## B) Religious language issues in the 21st century are relevant.

(30)

### Agree:

- Work of logical positivists in the 20th century—verification & falsification matches with scientific rationale
- Religious language is difficult to understand or difficult to understand its true meaning.
- Religious language can be paradoxical, for example, holy trinity
- Religious language is non-literal so causes doubt and ambiguity
- Wittgenstein: 'Whereof one cannot speak, one must remain silent' But, he later changed his mind—language games!
- Verification/falsification - Saves wasted time speaking about God/Separates sense from nonsense

### Disagree:

- Verification & falsification fail their own tests - so, maybe they aren't relevant in today's society!
- Strengths of the concepts of religious language. E.g Tillich, Wittgenstein, Randall, Aquinas etc—meaning comes from the way in which the language is used, or the way we interpret
- Contributions from Hick, Hare, Braithwaite, Swinburne etc..

**See Page 145 and 146 of the text book—the end of page 146 gives lots of examples of synoptic links you could use :)**

B) Assess the extent to which language games provides a suitable way of solving the problems of religious language. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

## B) Assess the extent to which language games provides a suitable way of solving the problems of religious language. (30)

### High Extent:

- When a person does learn a language for the first time, it is something that is bound to the cultural and societal convention wherein the language is being learnt
- It makes sense that you must be within the 'game' to understand—it is inappropriate to understand something outside of its 'form of life'
- Recognising religious language as a game, means it does have certain rules that apply to it—by engaging with them, we can come to an understanding and meaningful use of language.
- If there is no willingness to learn the rules of the game, then the game will remain 'closed' but, this is not the fault of those who play and live the game
- If you adopt a coherence or truth theory, then the language has meaning—understanding that something has validity for those within the game, even if it doesn't for those who are external
- What is meaningful for those within the group, may not be to those outside it—but, this should not detract from the meaning (could reference Hare's Bliks here)
- If the language results in cohesion and meaning to the community, can we really say it isn't valuable?!

### Low Extent:

- Language games cannot be verified or falsified—religious language within the game cannot be held up to objective scrutiny and doesn't fit within the empirical world—therefore, it doesn't solve the problem of religious language.
- You could still be wasting time speaking about God and not 'separating sense from nonsense'
- Hume's Fork
- Language games does not permit those outside the game to understand the way in which the language is true (but, only partially accurate remember—you CAN learn e.g. students in school)
- Are other concepts more successful?!

**B) The strengths of language games outweighs its weaknesses. (30)**

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

## B) The strengths of language games outweighs its weaknesses. (30)

### AGREE:

- Wittgenstein: Language was non-cognitive, where meaning was more important than truth and where it held meaning for those who use it. So, religious language has meaning to those who use it correctly.
- For those who accessed and utilised the language, there was clear transformed effects on their lives—how could they therefore not be viewed as meaningful?
- Language games related to a form of life that was unique, a way of living which defined itself through religious activity - if you adopt this approach, the meaningfulness of the language is unquestionable.
- As religious language has its own rules, it is possible to teach others about these rules and to share them with those who wished to learn and sustain to the rules.

### DISAGREE:

- Logical positivism : Metaphysical language is meaningless—it cannot be verified or falsified
- Logical positivist: All language is COGNITIVE - something to be held up to objective scrutiny and proven to be either true or false. 'God exists' might not be an expression of an external reality, but an opinion or expression of emotion.
- Hume: Any language that cannot be verified or falsified was condemned as meaningless and consigned to Hume's flames as being little more than sophistry.
- Language games does not permit those outside the game to understand the way in which the language is true (but, only partially accurate remember—you CAN learn). Wittgenstein never claimed the games were exclusive—only those who didn't have the opportunity wouldn't understand.
- If we reject the similarity between games and language, then the concept is inadequate—perhaps Wittgenstein has stretched the analogy too far—it is not possible to explain the concept of language, to someone who has never experienced language before
- In order to know what it means to play the game, you need to know what people are doing when they play the game—but, when a person uses language it is not enough to just know what they are doing, you also need to be able to understand it.
- How would you know what it meant to use the word 'God', if it meant something different in every religious language game that was played? Learning the religious language game could be unclear, which would alienate people outside the game. This is contradictory to conversion duties in religions.

A) Explain Wittgenstein's contribution to the debate about religious language. (20)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

## A) Explain Wittgenstein's contribution to the debate about religious language. (20)

### Draft Mark scheme:

#### Into to Wittgenstein:

- Wittgenstein's early years—logical positivism—'Whereof one cannot speak one must remain silent'
- Wittgenstein's later years - rejection of L.P—where he said language was non-cognitive, and much more about meaning than truth. He promoted his language games theory!
- Realist/anti-realist (coherency of truth)

#### Sum up of Language Games:

- Definition of language Games—'Form of Life' - 'The Game' (include appropriate example)
- Language in the game is non-cognitive
- Language in the game is not exclusive - it can be learned
- Language use has common features—a 'family resemblance', so therefore it can be learnt
- In learning the rules of a particular language game, we are bale to understand the sounds that we hear or the words that we read because we are able to understand the rules of the language game—(example of painting to support this).
- 'criteria of coherence'
- 'Category mistake'
- 'quotes from Vardy'
- Examples: Jesus' saves in comparison to footballer saves
- Example: Jesus is considered to be different for Jews, Christians and Muslims, but they all have equally valid answers.

A) Explain the challenges to Wittgenstein's theory of language games. (20)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

## A) Explain the challenges to Wittgenstein's theory of language games. (20) Pages 152-153 of textbook!

- **Language games is a non-cognitive use of language** - this recognises that it is not open to objective scrutiny and we cannot prove it to be objectively true
- **Rush Rhees challenged Wittgenstein's analogy:**
  - language was about making sense to other people, not just following protocol that was agreed upon, like the rules of a game
  - Whilst it is possible to explain a game to someone who has never played it before, it is not possible to explain language to someone who has never spoken language or heard language.
  - You do not necessarily need to understand the game in order to recognise that they are playing a game. However, in terms of language, it is not enough to just know what they are doing, you also need to be able to understand it.
- **Language games alienates people**
  - Each game has its own rules, which do not extend, Therefore, suggesting that it is not possible to communicate in any meaningful way between two users of different language games. This could lead to misunderstanding and confusion as how can they find a middle ground between them to communicate meaningfully?
- **If the word God has no objective meaning, how can we talk meaningfully about God?**
  - If God is applied to a language game, then that would imply there is no definite, cognitive objective way to use the word and could therefore lead to uncertainty about what the word means. Many Theists would disagree with this and struggle to accept that God has a different meaning, in different contexts.