

My Revision Notes: AQA AS Religious Studies: Religion and Ethics and Philosophy of Religion

AS Unit D Religion, Philosophy and Science: Now test yourself answers

4.1 Miracles

1. A transgression (violation) of a law of nature by a particular volition of a Deity or by the interposition of some invisible agent.
2. Lack of sufficient number of witnesses; people are prone to look for marvels and wonders; source of miracle stories are from ignorant people; the writers had a vested interest so there was bias; religious traditions contradict each other.
3. Science is neutral. It merely describes what it expects to happen. It cannot rule whether rules of nature can or cannot be broken.
4. Holland claimed that an event that has an explanation within natural laws can be considered a miracle, if it is taken religiously as a sign. Swinburne believed that miracles could be signs but they also had to break the law of nature (what Swinburne preferred to call 'counter instances to the law of nature').
5. An interpretive view of miracles sees God as sustainer but does not involve God in specific actions. An interventionist view of miracles sees God involved in specific actions, intervening supernaturally in historic events.
6. Some religious believers are persuaded that God has intervened supernaturally in historical events; in many religions sacred writings are recordings of supernatural events in which there is no hint that they are to be interpreted figuratively rather than literally
7. Strength's: Hume's definition cannot be true because an all-powerful and all-loving God would seek to deal with the world's real problems. Weaknesses: in response it could be argued that theodicies gives an explanation as to the justifications of the action of God in the world.
8. (i) All events can be explained without recourse to a God.
(ii) People's experiences of guidance or disclosure can be explained by psychology or coincidence.

4.2 Creation

1. (a) It contradicts science because it suggests the universe was created by God in six days.
(b) It is consistent with science if the word 'day' is understood to mean 'a period of time', or that a gap is inserted between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This then accommodates geological time and allows for an earth that is billions of years old. The view that the universe had a beginning is consistent with the Big Bang theory.
2. To support the claim: myths are symbolic narratives that convey profound truths. To challenge the claim: myths are not literal accounts but the Genesis account is taken to be literal.
3. Creatures are totally dependent on God and would not survive without his conserving action. Religious views differ about the exact nature of God's sustaining actions.
4. Because God is wholly transcendent and never immanent. Therefore he is inaccessible to creatures.
5. Because there was neither an explosion nor a 'bang', but an expansion.
6. (i) The universe is continuing to expand.
(ii) Scientists favour the view that 'dark energy' is pushing all galaxies further apart.
7. Some religious believers deny that the scientific method is the only valid source of knowledge. Religious texts are seen as the word of God and so as a source of truth. Also science can only consider the means whilst religion considers reasons, such as purpose and meaning.
8. Those organisms that are best adapted for the immediate, local environment have the best chance of survival.
9. Evolution can be seen as a mechanism which God used to bring about life, including human life.
10. If science can't explain how something happened, then God must be the explanation. God fills the unexplained gap.
11. (i) Science is trying to answer 'how' questions whereas religion is trying to answer the 'why' questions.
(ii) Science is based totally on human observation and reason. Religion is based partly on divine revelation.
(iii) Science tends to be impersonal but religion tends to be concerned with the personal.

4.3 The design argument

1. Just as an archer (intelligent being) must direct an arrow (an object without knowledge), God must direct nature.
2. The watch is a manufactured machine made by an intelligent being. Objects in nature are analogous to a manufactured machine, therefore the agent responsible for such design must be God.
3. Spatial order is the arrangement of things whereas temporal order is the patterns of behaviour of objects.
4. The theory of evolution by natural selection had provided an adequate explanation for complex animals and plants, without any need to appeal to the existence of God.
5. The world is more organic than it is mechanical therefore it cannot be likened to a machine.
6. Natural selection provides the mechanism for the appearance of order and design, which is actually the result of evolution by variation and survival.
7. The existence of an observer has no bearing on the probability of the occurrence of the events. What needs explaining is the occurrence of the event not the fact that someone can view the event. The victim survived the execution because the machine drew only Aces. The explanation required is about why the machine drew only Aces. The fact that the victim survived is the result of the machine drawing only aces, not the cause of it.
8. Justifying the claim: it is consistent with God as the explanation of a complex universe.
Challenging the claim: the theory of evolution gives a non-supernatural explanation.
9. Order and purpose are usually created by intelligence. The design argument is part of a cumulative argument and so does not claim to demonstrate all the attributes of God in each argument. The card shuffling machine illustration addresses the challenge that people would not be around to comment on the existence of the Universe unless the Universe was an orderly place.

4.4 Quantum mechanics and a religious world view

1. (i) Newtonian physics provides a realistic description of the Universe.
(ii) Newtonian physics is deterministic.
(iii) Newtonian physics outlook is reductionistic.
2. (i) It is not possible to describe the behaviour of subatomic particles.
(ii) Unpredictability is in the nature of matter itself.
(iii) Subatomic particles are composed of smaller particles that exhibit new properties.
3. It revealed a diffraction pattern that was characteristic of wave motion.
4. Atoms are both particles and waves.
5. The electron behaves in an unpredictable manner. This lack of certainty undermines the principle of determinism.
6. Einstein thought that matter was only unpredictable because of our present lack of knowledge. Bohr thought that uncertainty was real – objectively there.
7. His thought experiment concluded that until the box is opened by an observer the cat is both dead and alive. This was absurd. Schrodinger was pointing out that this was similar to the Copenhagen interpretation of electrons and was showing how absurd it was.
8. (i) Mystics speak of unity of all things. Quantum mechanics speaks more of differentiation
(ii) To the mystic the temporal world is illusory. Quantum mechanics is more about temporal change.
(iii) The goal of mysticism is to understand ultimate reality. The goal of science is to explain the nature of the world.
9. God could control the world at a subatomic level and so involve God within creation at all levels.
10. Some scientists see their limitations as due to lack of present knowledge which time will reduce, rather than lack of possible knowledge.
11. One example is that the truth can be difficult to describe adequately.
12. Mystical experiences are not about empirical reality. Quantum mechanics is about empirical reality.
13. (i) Both exhibit a leap of faith in that they both have things that cannot be verified.
(ii) Both are human responses to nature that seek explanations for the origin of life and the Universe.
14. (i) Science is about empirical data that can be tested. Religion acquires knowledge through revelation and faith, and is about the metaphysical.
(ii) Religion and science use different languages.