

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE PART 1 REVISION (PART A s)

Draw a mind map of everything we know that could come up in the religious experience topic of the exam:

A) Examine what philosophers understand by the term 'miracle'. (20)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

(a) Explain philosophical reasons for the claim that miracles do not happen.

Explain why belief in miracles may be challenged.

Examine philosophical issues raised by the concept of miracle.

Draft Mark scheme:

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

A) Compare the views of Hume and Swinburne on miracles
(20 marks)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

A) Explain the value of religious experience for the individual and community (20)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

A) Examine what philosophers understand by the term 'miracle'. (20)

HUME — 'transgression of a volition of a law of nature by the particular volition of a deity or supernatural being'

Must not only break LON but have 'divine cause' ie. walking on water

CHALLENGE: Weak Version (Soft Version) - Laws of nature are not fixed so could have exceptions—you would need to be able to prove this exception with evidence and testimony which Hume says is impossible.

Strong version (hard version)—Laws of nature cannot be altered = miracles impossible.

CHALLENGE: Use religious examples: Sun stopping during battle of Gibeon, Resurrection of Lazarus,

AQUINAS —3 types

i) something nature cannot do (sun going back on it's course)

li) something nature can do but not in that order (resurrection) "Those things...which are done by divine power apart from the order generally followed in things."

li) Something that nature can do but god intervenes to do (healing a common cold)

Primary and Secondary miracles

CHALLENGE: Double Agency

HOLLAND— Does not need to break a LON or need God.

'A coincidence can be taken religiously as a sign and called a miracle'.

Train Analogy

Holland calls this a 'contingency miracle': when there is an event that although possible, cannot be predicted with certainty. If this event takes place as it has religious significance it can be called a miracle.

SWINBURNE -

Can violate law of nature: "There is good reason to believe that the following events, if they occurred, would be violations of the laws on nature: Levitation, Resurrection... water turning to wine... and a man being cured from polio in a minute."

Constantly revising laws of nature if something seems to break one would make laws of nature 'clumsy and ad hoc'.

2 Criteria for a miracle: timescale and religious significance

Rarity of miracles

CHALLENGE: Feather analogy

WILES

Explain why belief in miracles may be challenged.

Examine philosophical issues raised by the concept of miracle.

HUME:

5 criticisms:

- 1) Regularity thesis: 'a wise man proportions his beliefs to the evidence'
- 2) Testimony: i) from 'ignorant and barbarous nations'
ii) Attested to by those who are uneducated or of 'poor quality' ie. Fisherman of New Testament
- 3) People only believe in miracles because we are naturally drawn to superstition, awe and wonder
- 4) Conflicting claims to miracles ie. Christianity Jesus was resurrected but in Islam he was taken from the cross by Allah to be in Jannah

AJ AYER

Verification principle:

Statements about both God and miracles are not either tautological or provable by sense experience. (*Inspired by Hume's fork*)

SPINOZA

1. The will of God is identical with the laws of nature.
2. A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature.

Necessarily, God's will is inviolable.
Therefore, miracles cannot happen.

Voltaire

A miracle is the violation of mathematical, divine, immutable (unchangeable), eternal laws. Therefore a miracle is a contradiction in terms: a law cannot at the same time be immutable and violated.

It is impossible a being infinitely wise can have made laws to violate them.

It is therefore not logical to ascribe miracles to God; they would indicate a lack of forethought, or of power, or both.

FLEW

1. Miracles are by nature particular and unrepeatable.
 2. Natural events are by nature general and repeatable.
 3. Now, in practice, the evidence for the general and repeatable is always greater than that for the particular and unrepeatable.
- Therefore, in practice, the evidence will always be greater against miracles than for them.

A) Compare the views of Hume and Swinburne on miracles (20 marks)

Laws of nature:

HUME: Regularity thesis

Empiricism

'a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence'

SWINBURNE: 'corrigible'

Principle of credulity

If we revise laws of nature our approach would be 'ad hoc and clumsy'

Testimony:

HUME:

'Ignorant and barbarous'

Uneducated ie. Fisherman of New Testament

SWINBURNE:

Criticism of Aquinas ie. not always uneducated/Hume never states what he would deem as 'educated' in the first place

Principle of testimony

Belief in miracles:

HUME: Must break a LON. Can't ever be proven (be careful not to repeat too much from first point but maybe find a unique quote)

SWINBURNE: They are rare as they interfere with Free Will but can happen. Don't have to break LON.

2 criteria: 1) Timescale 2) religious Significance

Conflicting claims:

HUME – these cancel out miracles

SWINBURNE – Miracles do not seek to prove a faith so conflicting claims are OK.

Explain the value of religious experience for the individual and community (20)

Community:

Affirms their belief system by confirming the authority of their leaders ie. Muhammed and the Qur'an; virgin birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18-21)

Can convert people to the faith and so builds the community ie. the conversion of Saul (Acts 9: 1-5). The Toronto blessing that swept across Canada and the USA and led to the conversion of thousands to Christianity.

Reveals and promotes the value system of a faith ie. the revelation of the 10 commandments to Moses. Helps guide the religious community in how to live ie. following the beatitudes of Jesus which are affirmed by the miracles he performed.

Strengthens the cohesion/bond between community members ie. celebrating past miracles such as the Virgin Birth at Easter or the springing up of the well for Hagar during Hajj. Worshippers celebrating this together can create a sense of unity and establishes a common identity.

Individual:

Can restore an individuals faith through either a personal experience or the testimony of others. Ie. Thomas (disciple of Jesus) was discouraged after Jesus' death, but when Jesus revealed himself in his resurrected form, Thomas was encouraged.

Strengthens faith in the face of opposition. Ie. Jesus faced persecution when he was crucified like believers may face here on earth. However, his resurrection is evidence to those who suffer now that this life is not the end but that there is a better life to come.

Renews commitment to religious ideals and doctrines. Many choose to exhibit their faith in an outward way after a religious experience. Ie. Many Christians describe a sense of 'being called' to show their faith through adult baptism. Furthermore, the experience of Muslims on munt Arafat during Hajj leads them to feel a closer sense of God once they have returned and therefore commit even further into their faith as a 'Hajji' or 'Hajjah'