

‘Beyond the Textbook’

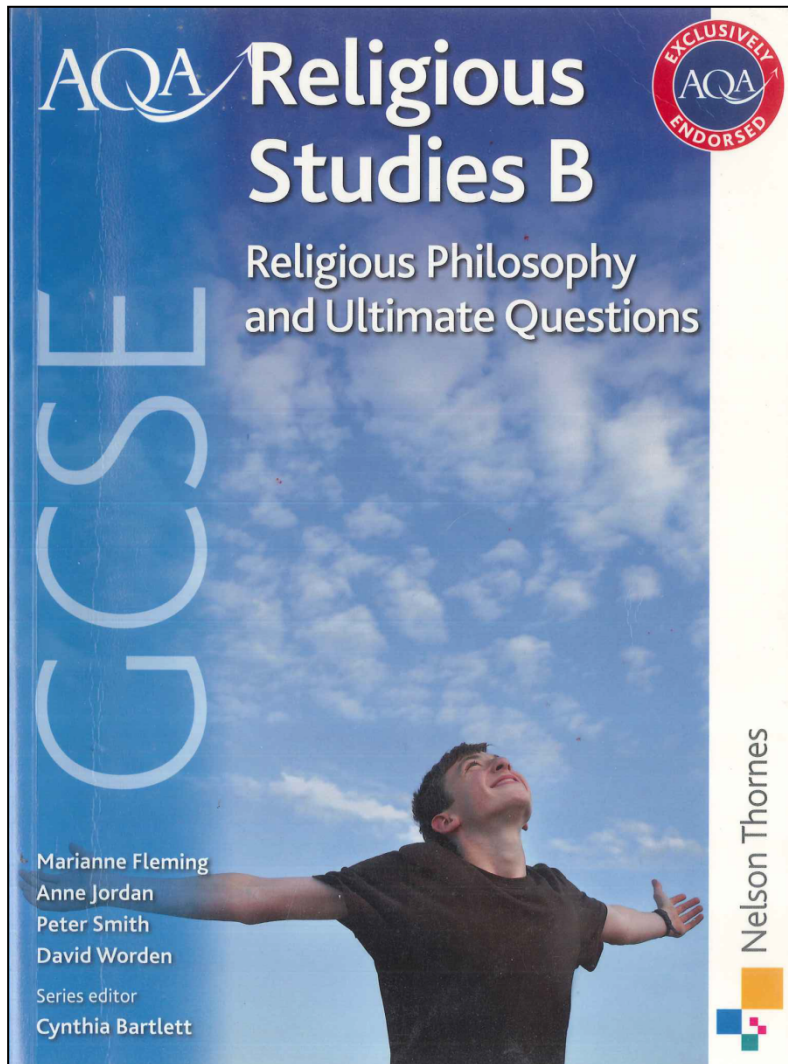
Implementing Philosophy in the RE classroom

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#BeyondTheTextbook

Why go ‘beyond’ the textbook?



“Using Nelson Thornes support materials means teachers and students can be absolutely confident that they are learning *what we want* them to learn and following the course *as our examiners intended*”

How do we PROVE that things exist?

Getting the tools for the job



Before we examine any of these arguments for the existence of God, it is important that we understand what 'prove' means.

There are three main types of 'proof'.

You need to know the difference.

What would it take to convince you that the Loch Ness Monster exists?

Write down one thing on your sticky note



Stick your
idea on the
correct
'proof'

Three Types of Proof

1 Personal experience

I saw it and therefore I know it exists

2 Reliable evidence

I have not seen it but the evidence of other people has convinced me it exists

3 Logic

I have not seen it but there is a logical reason to believe it exists

(Using a chain of reasoning to reach a conclusion)

Does God exist?

Strongly agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly disagree



Theist

Agnostic

Atheist

As a group, come to a decision about which of the three proofs is the *best evidence* for the existence of God. Be ready to explain your decision.

1. Personal Experience
2. Reliable Evidence
3. Logic

1 The existence of God

1.1 How do we prove that things exist?

Research activity

How René Descartes proved that God existed

René Descartes was a philosopher who lived in France in the 17th century. Descartes believed that he had found a solution to the problem of how to prove God's existence. Use the internet and/or a library to find out how he solved the problem. Share your findings with the rest of the class.

Objectives

Consider how things are proved to exist.



A René Descartes was born in France in 1596

How do we prove that things exist?

There are **three** main ways by which the existence of things is proved:

- 1 Personal experience – 'I have seen it, so I know it exists.'
- 2 Reliable evidence – 'I have not seen it but other people have convinced me that they have, so I accept its existence.'
- 3 Using a chain of reasoning to reach a conclusion (logic) – 'I have not seen it but there must be a logical reason to believe in its existence.'

Does the Loch Ness monster exist?

These three types of evidence can be demonstrated by looking at how people try to prove the existence of the Loch Ness monster. People who accept that Nessie exists use one or all of the following types of proof:

- They are certain Nessie exists because they have seen the monster for themselves.
- They accept the accounts and evidence of sightings of Nessie given by other people.
- With all the sightings of Nessie in Loch Ness, it seems more likely that there is a 'monster' in Loch Ness rather than no monster, so it is logical to accept that there is such a creature as Nessie living in Loch Ness.

Other people refuse to accept that they depend on people to give to prove things. For example, people reject the existence of Nessie because:

- They have not seen any evidence for themselves, so do not accept that Nessie exists.
- They do not accept the evidence of sightings by other people as sufficient proof. They think that the people who claim to have seen Nessie might be hallucinating or lying, or that the sighting is wishful thinking as people want to see the 'monster'. It might be a case of mistaken identity, or a deliberate hoax to fool people.



B Is this the Loch Ness monster or trick photography?

- They think that without any proof of such a large creature living in the loch, it is not logical to accept the existence of Nessie.

How do we prove that God exists?

The same types of evidence that are used to prove or reject the existence of Nessie can be used to prove or reject the existence of God. A **theist** is certain that God exists because they:

- are certain that they have been in contact with God directly
- accept the accounts that other people have given of their experience of God as evidence that God exists
- believe that God is the only logical explanation for the origin of the universe and the order within it.

An **atheist** rejects any belief in God, as they do not believe that any evidence accepted by theists is sufficient proof that God exists.

An **agnostic** believes that any evidence produced by theists does not prove the existence of God one way or the other. They believe that it cannot be known whether or not God exists.

Is it important to prove that God exists?

In many ways, the arguments we are going to look at in this chapter are not really proving that God exists, as theists are already sure that God exists, and atheists are unlikely to change their mind unless they have a religious experience. An agnostic will probably think that the arguments do not provide sufficient proof to convince them of God's existence with certainty. Buddhists do not believe in God so any proof offered is not going to change their beliefs.

Discussion activity

Divide the class into four groups. Each group represents one of the following people:

- a theist who attends a place of worship regularly
- a person who believes in God but does not attend a place of worship
- an atheist
- an agnostic.

Each group is to work out reasons the person would give for their beliefs. They are to support your group's point with evidence.

A representative from each group will stand in front of the class to form part of a 'Question Time' panel to discuss whether or not God exists. There needs to be a chairperson to control the discussion. Each member of the panel is to state their views. Then, members of the class can ask the panel questions about their beliefs or add additional points to support or reject a view expressed by the panel.

Summary

You should now be able to explain the evidence theists use to support their belief in the existence of God, and why atheists and agnostics do not accept such evidence as proof for the existence of God.

Key terms

Theist: a person who believes in God.

Atheist: a person who believes there is no God.

Agnostic: a person who believes we cannot be sure whether God exists.

Discussion: What was good about the lesson?

Activities

1 'I know that God exists because my prayers have been answered.'

2 Is this statement more likely to be made by an atheist or a theist? Explain your choice.

3 Explain what the term 'agnostic' means.

AQA Examiner's tip

Make sure that you are able to answer questions that ask you what is meant by a 'theist', an 'atheist' and an 'agnostic'.

What is an argument?

- The general structure of an argument is that of premises (or statements) in support of a conclusion.
- So an argument can be very simple:

Premise 1 (P1) + Premise 2 (P2) = C

$$1 + 2 = 3$$

Example 1

- P1- Man United are the best club side in Europe
- P2- Celtic drew against Man United on Wednesday
- C- Celtic are as good a team as Man United.

Example 2

- P1- Will is a bachelor.
- P2- All bachelors are unmarried men
- C- Will is an unmarried man

Spot the difference?

Probability, Experience

- P1- The moon is bright tonight
- P2- The moon was bright yesterday
- C- The moon will be bright tomorrow

**A posteriori
Inductive**

Definition, Not experience

- P1- Vera is a spinster
- P2- A spinster is an unmarried female
- C- Vera is unmarried

**A priori
Deductive**

Two types of philosophical reasoning

= after

A **posteriori**
Inductive

- This reasoning is based on premises which are drawn from experience of the world
- There could be more than one conclusion
- We may need evidence from our experience to support the conclusion
- **PROBABILITY**

= before

A **priori**
Deductive

- This reasoning is based on using logic alone (not experience)
- The conclusion is the only one that can be true
- **PROOF**

Group Task

1. Identify which type of philosophical reasoning is being used in each argument. (Fill in grid)
2. Analyse each argument. Do they have any problems within them? (Fill in grid)
3. Evaluate the different types of philosophical reasoning. What are their strengths and weaknesses? (Complete slides)

End



Which type of reasoning?

- P1- All men are mortal
- P2- Socrates is a man
- C- Therefore, Socrates is mortal

Deductive and a priori

Which type of reasoning?

- P1- All the boys in my class have short hair
- P2- Charlie has short hair
- C- Charlie is a boy

Inductive and a posteriori

Which type of reasoning?

- P1- God is the total of all perfections
- P2- Existence is a perfection
- C- God must exist

Deductive and a priori

Which type of reasoning?

- P1- All events require a cause
- P2- The creation of the universe was an event
- C- God is the cause of the universe

Inductive and a posteriori

A posteriori inductive (probability)

✓ Is **strong** because...

- It is based on universal experiences
- It is persuasive as it is based in probability and shows what is the most likely conclusion

✗ Is **weak** because...

- The evidence is based in the senses
- It is based in probability so the conclusion is not certain- others might be just as convincing

A priori deductive (proof)

✓ Is **strong** because...

- It does not depend on the variables of experience
- If the premises are true, then the conclusion has to be true

✗ Is **weak** because...

- It requires that we accept the truth of the premises presented.
- It does not offer up any new information other than a definition



 Miss Carter
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Tweecher plenary



Hack my account and Tweet a question about today's lesson. Try to use #keywords- remember only 140 chars or less!

10/07/2015 19:31

6 RETWEETS 4 FAVORITES



Swap with your partner. Tweet a reply to show your new knowledge.



**Why go
beyond the
Textbook?**

Engagement with
philosophical
concepts at a
potentially deeper
level.



Continue the
discussion...

#BeyondTheTextbook
@MissAVECarter
@PSSConference

Provide new
learning
opportunities.

Develop pupils'
higher order
thinking skills

Promote
good practice
through
creativity.

Wright, A. (2008) **Critical Religious Education and the National Framework for Religious Education in England and Wales** (London, Kings College)

- *A good overview of the history of RE in the National Curriculum. A sound critique of pedagogical approaches. An insightful method of improving the rigour of the subject in schools through use of philosophy.*

Religious Education Council (2013) **Non-statutory National Curriculum for RE: A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England** (Religious Education Council of England and Wales)

- *Outlines provision for RE nationally. Highlights the sense of crisis felt by the RE community as it was left off national curriculum reform in 2013. Put together without public funding even though RE remains a subject required on the curriculum of all state schools. Launched at Westminster in Oct 2013. Will come into effect for GCSEs/A Level Sept 2016.*

Clarke and Woodhead (2015), **A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools** (Westminster Faith Debates)

- *A series of recommendations for complete reform of Religious Education. Calls to place RE on equal footing with other subjects in the National Curriculum and rename as 'Moral and Religious Education'.*

Recommended REading



@NATREupdate

@RECouncil

@RE_Today

@BlogSyncRE

@CandleConferences

@BobBowie

@LindaWoodhead

#rechatuk

#P4C