



# **Religious Studies Preparation Work for A Level**



## **Section one Reason and Experience**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Key questions and issues covered in this section**

### **Reason and Experience**

**Rationalism (logic/reason) VS Empiricism (senses and experience)**

Where do ideas come from?

Is it possible to conceive of something I couldn't investigate using my senses?

Can we think of things that we don't encounter in our every day lives?

Are there other sources of knowledge other than the senses and experience?

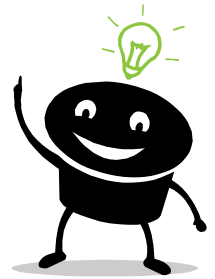
Is the source of all our knowledge experience?



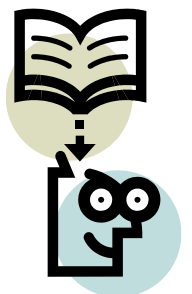
# The big question...

Ideas...are they Innate or are we a Tabula Rasa?

## Key Terms:



- **Idea or Concept:** This is an understanding of something. It might be that we have a representation in our minds, like the idea of unicorn, where we can have a 'mental picture' in our minds of such a being.
- It might be more abstract than that however, like the idea of justice or morality. I cannot see these things as an image in my mind but I know what my understanding of them is.
- We have to have an **idea or concept** of something **before** we can **know** it, but we might not have knowledge of everything we have an idea of.
- For example you might have an idea of God without knowing or even believing that He exists.
- We may have the idea that A causes B. For example, the idea that bricks cause windows to shatter.



- **Knowledge:** This is a proposition or statement that we **believe**; it is **justified** and it is **true**.
- The most common definition of knowledge is the:  
**Tripartite Theory of knowledge** (meaning 3 parts)  
introduced by Plato.

To really be knowledge it has to have 3 parts= **Justified –True –Belief.**

So we cannot **know** that hippogriffs exist if it is **not true** that they do. We can however look at the **idea** and where it came from. If it is not knowledge its belief.

# Spiders VS Ants!

## Rationalism - Know the basics:

This is the view that the ultimate source of knowledge is **reason**.

Rationalists often look to maths as a model for their philosophy, because it is certain, true in all situations and can be known independently from experience (a priori).

They often have a distrust of the senses...senses can deceive, so how can they ever provide us with certain knowledge?

**Innate ideas** can be a source of knowledge. These are ideas that are present in the mind from birth and provide us with knowledge about the world. This may include morality, or God.

Add your example:

The rationalist philosopher can be likened to a **spider**, generating knowledge from within themselves, just as a spider spins a web using no external materials.

## Empiricism - Know the basics:

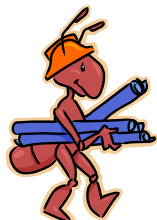
Empiricism is the view that the ultimate source of knowledge is experience, and all ideas about the world come from **experience** (a posteriori).



Empiricists claim that we are born as a 'blank slate' or 'tabula rasa' with no ideas and everything we know has to come from the five senses.

Add your example:

The empiricist philosopher can be likened to an **ant**, unable to produce anything without going and gathering the materials from the external world.



## Rationalism - Know the basics: test yourself - Fill in the gaps

This is the view that the ultimate source of knowledge is **reason**.

Rationalists often look to \_\_\_\_\_ as a model for their philosophy, because it is certain and true in all situations and can be \_\_\_\_\_ independently from

**(a'priori).**

They often have a distrust of the \_\_\_\_\_...senses can \_\_\_\_\_, so how can they ever provide us with certain knowledge?

**Innate ideas** can be a source of \_\_\_\_\_. These are ideas that are present in the \_\_\_\_\_ from birth and provide us with knowledge about the \_\_\_\_\_. This may include morality, or God.

The rationalist philosopher can be likened to a \_\_\_\_\_ generating knowledge from within themselves, just as a spider spins a web using no external materials.

*maths  
spider*

*experience deceive*

*knowledge*

*known world*

*senses*

*mind*

## Empiricism - Know the basics: test yourself—Fill in the gaps

Empiricism is the view that the ultimate source of knowledge is experience, and we have no ideas about the world that do not come from

**(a'posteriori).**

Empiricists claim that we are born as a \_\_\_\_\_ or 'tabula rasa' with no ideas and everything we know has to come from the five \_\_\_\_\_.

The empiricist philosopher can be likened to an \_\_\_\_\_; unable to produce anything without going and gathering the materials from the \_\_\_\_\_ world.

*Experience  
Ant*

*senses*

*external*

*blank slate*

# Rationalism and Innate Ideas



## Support for Rationalism:

### The senses deceive us!

Reason is the most reliable source of ideas.

How can we ever have certainty unless we find some source of ideas that does not come from the senses and so will not lie to us?

#### **How do they deceive us?**

- Sticks in water look bent...
- The sun looks tiny...but we know it is huge
- train tracks seems to meet in the distance...these are all simple examples of when the sense are deceived, they are illusions.
- Our senses are not giving us accurate information and so we are not seeing the world as it really is.
- After too many drinks, people see pink elephants or dehydrated travellers may see a sparkling waterfall.
- These are examples of **hallucination**, our sense are telling us things exist when they do not
- our sensory data is **not the same as reality**.

*'..it is prudent never to trust entirely those who have once deceived us'*



This is a quote by **Descartes**, who pointed out that if our senses can deceive us sometimes how do we know they are not always deceiving us?

**How far do you agree? Give reasons....**



## Rene Descartes (1596 - 1650)

### Dreaming Argument



Descartes argued that a dream, the sense data we have are just as lively and as vivid as real life. When you dream of eating a chocolate ice cream, it smells just as chocolatey, tastes just as sweet, feels just as cold, looks just as brown. But it doesn't exist!

However, when we are in a dream, there is no way to tell. We only know that it wasn't reality once we wake up...but what if we never wake up?!

**"Though this be true, I must nevertheless here consider that I am a man, and that, consequently, I am in the habit of sleeping...how often have I dreamt that I was in these familiar circumstances, that I was dressed, and occupied this place by the fire, when I was lying undressed in bed? At the present moment, however, I certainly look upon this paper with eyes wide awake; the head which I now move is not asleep; I extend this hand consciously and with express purpose, and I perceive it; the occurrences in sleep are not so distinct as all this. But I cannot forget that, at other times I have been deceived in sleep by similar illusions; and, attentively considering those cases, I perceive so clearly that there exist no conclusive signs by which the state of waking can ever be distinguished from sleep, that I feel greatly astonished; and in amazement I almost persuade myself that I am now dreaming."**

**Descartes 'Meditations'.**

Descartes pushed this scepticism of the senses even further...what if there was an **evil demon** who controlled every experience we have?

None of what we taste, smell, see, hear etc is real.

**Could you be dreaming right now? Explain your view Consider all the possibilities...**

# Activity

**What other examples of sense deception can you think of?  
Does it feature in any other modern films?**

**Is there anything that would still be true whether you are dreaming or not?**

**Can you think of any criticisms of the dreaming argument for not trusting the senses? You should consider whether there is any way to tell whether you are dreaming.**

**Do you agree with Descartes that we can't entirely trust our senses as they do sometimes deceive us?**





# Innate Ideas

## Some concepts do not come from experience...

How do I get the concept of Freedom, Justice or Triangles?  
Is there any experience that could have given me these ideas?  
If not, this is **support** for the **Rationalist**.



### Innate Ideas.

These are ideas that are present in the mind from **birth**.  
If innate ideas exist then this is obvious proof that some ideas do not result from experience. That we can have knowledge apriori. There have been many suggestions by rationalists as to what ideas are innate.

### **AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION TO REMEMBER**

The philosophy of innatism is sometimes divided into two areas:

1: **Knowledge innatism:** this doctrine asserts that humans have access to knowledge that is possessed innately. To know something is to have an **idea** that is **true**.

2: **Idea Innatism:** also known as concept innatism, is the doctrine that asserts humans have access to certain inborn ideas. **They may not be true** and so are **not** classed as **knowledge**.

# The Innate idea of God...

According to Descartes the idea of God must be innate. How can the idea of something infinite and perfect have been formed, as nothing in the world, including ourselves, is infinite or perfect.

The only explanation Descartes argued is that God Himself is the only thing perfect enough to create the idea of an infinite and perfect being. It is as if God has left a 'makers mark' on Descartes conscious. This is just like a craftsman leaving his mark on a piece of furniture or jewellery so people can identify the creator (admit it, you watch the Antiques Road show!)

In the same way, God has left the innate idea of Himself in Descartes' mind so that he can identify his creator. This is often known as the Trademark Argument.

**What do you think? Do you think we have an innate idea of God? Explain your view:**

# The Innate idea of Morality...

Do we have an innate idea of right and wrong? If you gave a child a bag of sweets to divide between friends would they have the innate idea that everyone should get the same amount?

G.E. Moore claimed that moral ideas are known intuitively, which is known as 'moral intuitionism'. According to Moore morality cannot be gained from anything in the world, because we cannot be reduced to the concept of 'good' to anything we can observe.

For example, when we observe someone hitting someone else for no reason, we don't experience anything that we can identify as 'wrongness' or unfairness'. Yet we still have the idea of morality.

**What do you think? Do you think we have an innate idea of morality? Explain your view:**

**Plato's realm of the forms.**

Use the internet to research Plato's Ideal Realm called the  
**world of forms**

**Note down his key ideas here in bullet points:**

# Empiricism and the Tabula Rasa

The main critique of Rationalism comes from the empiricist claim that innate ideas do not exist, and that therefore all knowledge is **a'posteriori** (from experience).

## Support for Empiricism!

### The mind as a blank slate:

- ♦ The Latin for blank slate is *tabula rasa*, and this is a key empiricist concept. We are born with no ideas, but gradually learn them through experience. It is as if our minds are like white pieces of paper waiting to be written on by experience.
- ♦ Although this idea goes back as far as Aristotle, in Ancient Greece, it is primarily associated with John Locke.

**Do you think you were born blank like paper? Explain your view here:**



### John Locke (1632 - 1704)-problems with Rationalism

- There are no innate ideas. If there were innate ideas, why don't we all have them?
- Locke also pointed out, in response to Descartes' claim that the idea of God was innate, that some people don't have the idea of God at all. Even when people do believe in God, the idea of what he/she is like, how many there are and so on varies from culture to culture. Surely this shows that the idea of God has come from the different experiences we have been exposed to.
- Some people don't seem to be able to grasp the principles of maths and logic, such as 'children and idiots'. How can these ideas be innate?

**How far do you agree? Give reasons.**

# David Hume



- ♦ **If we cannot experience something we can have no idea of it.**  
Hume illustrates this by saying that if someone **lacks the sensory** apparatus to have an experience then they can **never** have the **corresponding idea**.
- ♦ According to Hume, 'a blind man can have no notion of colour, nor a deaf man of sound' and uses this to show there are **no a'priori** ideas.

Hume focused on **ideas** for much of his work, and said that even if we have the idea of something that does not seem to be from experience, with careful analysis;

**All complex ideas can be broken down to simple ideas and traced to experiences we have had.**

- ♦ Take the example of God, which seems not to have come from anything we have experienced, according to Descartes.
- ♦ Hume said that this complex idea can be broken down into simple ideas we have experienced.

Goodness + Love + Father Figure + Justice + Power ...

...we have experienced all these things so we just put them together and make them bigger.

- ♦ This, says Hume is how we can create the ideas of 'Golden Mountains' or 'Virtuous Horses' even though we have not experienced these things, because we have experience the component parts. We do not have enough imagination to make it up.

Hume says there are various ways we can manipulate the simple ideas:

- **Augment** (make bigger)
- **Diminish** (make smaller)
- **Compound** (put together)
- **Transpose** (move around)
- **Negate** (reverse)

**Do you agree with Hume? Explain your view here:**

# Activity:

**How would Hume use the terms described to explain where the following ideas have come from?**

**A unicorn:**

**A giant purple penguin in the desert:**

**Superman:**

**Justice:**

**Eternal Life:**

**Beauty:**

**Were any of these more difficult to explain? If they were, does this provide a criticism of empiricism?**

# Section Two

## The Idea of God

### **Key questions and issues covered in this section.**

#### **The Idea of God**

What attributes does God have?

Does God have a body (incorporeal)?

Are the attributes of God contradictory? How can they make sense?

How can we have any concept of God? Where does our concept come from?

# The Attributes of God

What characteristics is God believed to hold and do they make sense on their own (singularly coherent) or when used with others (mutually coherent).

Is God a person?

If God is a person, he must be a special kind of person. What do you think?

Does God have a body? Is it possible to be a person without a body?

**Strawson** stated that there are 2 types of predicates:

<b><i>M</i> Predicates</b>	<b><i>P</i> Predicates</b>
⇒ These are attributes <b>material things</b> can have.	⇒ These are attributes only <b>CONSCIOUS beings</b> can have.
⇒ For example - Being 10 stone, being blue, having 4 sides or occupying a position in space.	⇒ For example - enjoying chocolate, believing in fairies, fearing spiders.

Strawson went on to say that persons, as we normally think of them, have **BOTH kinds of predicate**.

If God has no body (i.e. immaterial) he cannot have M predicates and must therefore have only P Predicates. **What do you think?**

What are the implications of saying that God does not have a body? Jot some thoughts here:



# So, does God have a body?

*Swinburne* stated that a normal person has the following features:

- A) Disturbances in the body cause aches and pains.**
- B) Feelings occur inside the body, such as hunger.**
- C) They can move parts of the body directly.**
- D) They look out on the world, from wherever their body is.**
- E) Thoughts and feelings can be affected by what is happening in their body, for example drugs or alcohol.**

Which ones do not apply to God?

Could any be applied to God? How?



If God does have a body, what does it look like? Explain your opinion:

# Omnipotence

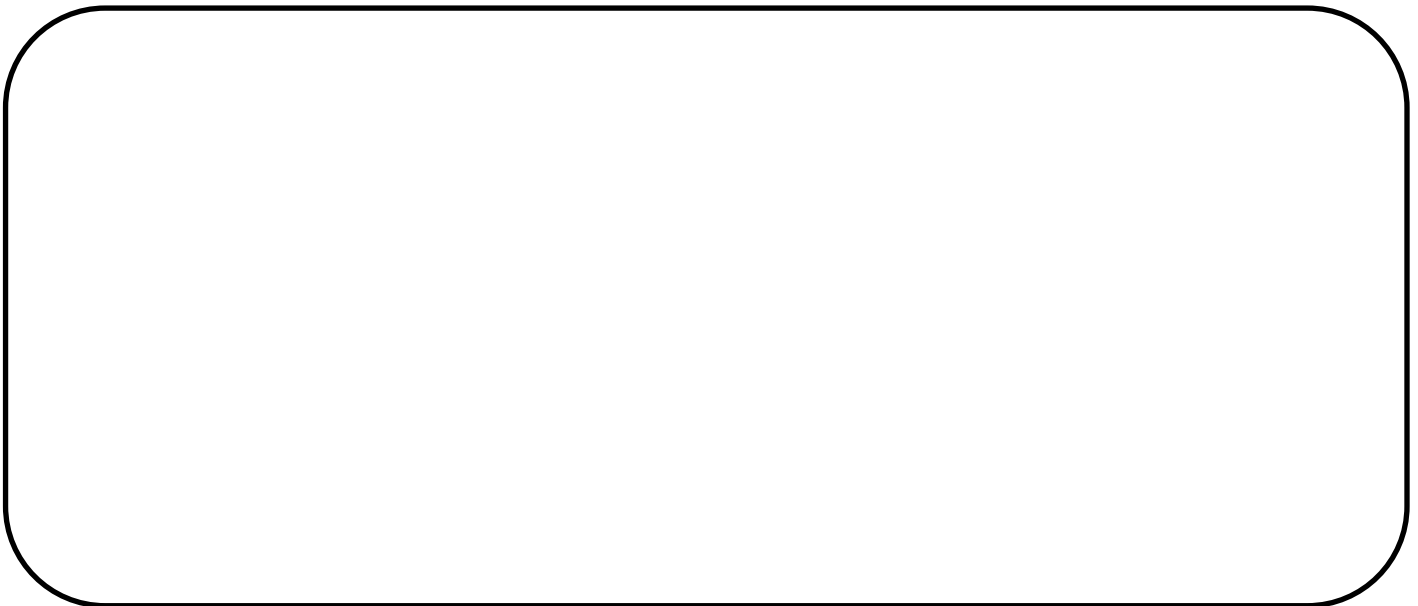
What does it mean to be All-Powerful? How could you define Omnipotence?

Explain why each of the following definitions presents problems:

- 1. *To be omnipotent is to be able to do everything you want to do.***
- 2. *To be omnipotent is to be able to do everything.***
- 3. *To be omnipotent is to be able to do anything that is logically possible.***
- 4. *To be omnipotent is to have all logically possible powers that it is logically possible for a being with God's attributes to possess.***

This is Kenny's proposed definition. So.... It is not logically possible for God to cough or die, as he does not have a body.

But... is omnipotence a coherent idea? It seems that it is a more complex term than we first thought! What is your view? Explain your ideas here:

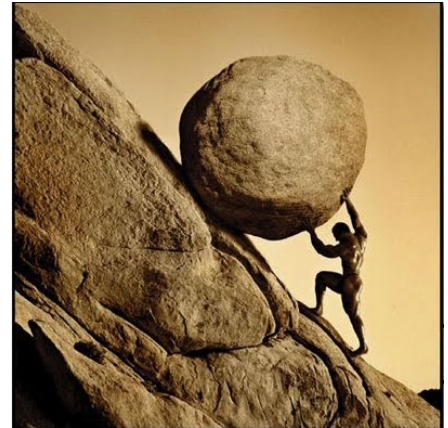


# The Paradox of the Stone

Could God create a stone that is too heavy for him to lift?

- ⇒ If he can, it is something he is not able to lift, so he can't be all powerful.
- ⇒ If he can't create it, then that is still something he is unable to do and so he can't be all powerful!

Does being all-powerful then, make any sense at all??!!



What do you think of this?

God is incorporeal (no body) and so the idea of doing a physical action like lifting does not apply.

God is able to do everything that that is not logically a contradiction. So we cannot expect God to make  $2+2=5$  or make a 4 sided triangle. The paradox of the stone is a logical contradiction and so we should not expect this of God.

Which view do you agree with?

# Omniscience

- ⇒ To be omniscient means to be all-knowing, but what does this entail?
- ⇒ God cannot know something that is false.....so it is more accurate to say that **omniscience means to know all true propositions.**
- ⇒ An additional problem is that if God has no body, how can he know things that we know about through our senses - like sugar is sweet, light is bright etc.
- ⇒ Maybe we can say that he does know all these things, but through **different means** than we do. But even so, how can he know what the sweetness of sugar feels like?
- ⇒ God has to give us freewill or he would not be all loving.

## **BUT**

- ⇒ If God is omniscient, he knows everything we will do in the future.
- ⇒ If he knows something then it will necessarily happen.
- ⇒ But if an action is necessary and will DEFINITELY happen, then how can we have freewill???

Aquinas tried to solve this by saying that God is outside of time.

## **Swinburne on Omniscience and Freewill**

Swinburne stated:

**Either:** We have freewill and **god is not omniscient.**

**Or:** **God is omniscient** and our actions cannot be otherwise so we have no freewill.

He concluded:

**God gave up his omniscience when he gave us freewill.**

What do you think of this conclusion?



# **Section Three**

## **Freewill and**

## **Determinism**

# Do you make Decisions?

## **Determinism says NO!**

We feel as if we are free because we are aware of deliberating and choosing our actions but really we're not free because we are unaware of what causes us to act.  
Spinoza

### **Definition of Determinism:**

- 1. Every event that occurs has a cause.**
- 2. It is a belief that a determinate set of conditions can produce only one possible outcome given fixed laws of nature.**

For example :Animals may appear to show purposeful behaviour and make decisions but really their behaviour is robotic, pre programmed responses.

Animals ...

- Are genetically programmed
- Only have physical desires, e.g. food, shelter
- Are trained by reward and punishment, not educated
- Cannot reason and deliberate on decisions
- Repeat limited behaviours rather than develop new ones
- Just follow the instincts of the species
- Show no variety or flexibility in response
- Do not have desires about desires i.e. wanting to eat less
- Do not choose purposes in life

Why do you think this might be?

Do you think there are any differences between animals and human behaviour?

# Could I have acted otherwise?

- Human decision making...do we have **free will** or is that an **illusion** too?

*How do you decide what you will do on a Friday night? What factors or conditions influence your decision?*

List External conditions  
that affect your decision

List Internal conditions  
that affect your decision



How free are you? Do you think you **could have acted otherwise?**

How responsible are you?

So can your parents tell you off for sloping off to the concert? Or is it just all **beyond your control?** Why?

# Freewill - Key Definitions

**Determinism-** Every event has a \_\_\_\_\_.

- It is the belief that a determinate set of conditions can produce only \_\_\_\_possible outcome given fixed laws of \_\_\_\_\_.
- This applies to human \_\_\_\_\_and \_\_\_\_\_too.

***Decisions Cause one actions nature***

**Free will-** A theory that states that human beings are \_\_\_\_\_ agents.  
That when making decisions, some or all of the following factors are significant;

1. It is in our power to act \_\_\_\_\_-we can select priorities and allow certain parts of our character to predominate.
2. We are able to \_\_\_\_\_over decisions and exercise control over our\_\_\_\_\_.
3. We are able to act according to our decisions (in accordance with our will) without \_\_\_\_\_or coercion.

***desires differently reason hindrance autonomous***

**Cause and effect** -the principle of causality states that \_\_\_\_\_  
and every change has a \_\_\_\_\_. It is supposed to apply without any \_\_\_\_\_.

***cause every event exceptions***



# In support of Determinism

## **Predestination and Fatalism**

1. If God is all knowing then God knows our future
2. Thus the future must **necessarily** happen
3. We cannot change the future
4. Therefore we have no free will.

**What do you think? If God knows what happens next do we still have a free choice?**

**How responsible for our actions are we if predestination is true? Why?**

## Determinism key points

- Determinism makes two claims that every event has a cause (universal causation): and that given the total set of conditions under which the cause occurs only one effect is possible (causal necessity)
- These claims can't be empirically proven, but can be understood as the findings of science .
- We can understand **actions** and **choices** as **events**. Therefore , according to determinism, they have causes. In any situation, given those causes, only one action or choice is possible.
- However, there is an important distinction between actions and natural causation. We can distinguish between what someone **does** and what just **happens** and **explain them differently**. We also hold people responsible for their actions.
- Determinism argues that human actions are subject to natural laws-the laws of Physics, neurophysiology or psychology.
- Determinism does not mean that we can predict what happens. It means that if we could know everything about the cause and set of conditions, we could predict the effect. This applies as much to choices as anything else.

Are you a determinist? Why/why not?

# Free will

Libertarians are people that believe we all have freewill and that we can make uncaused decisions and choices. This means that each individual is responsible for their own action and in charge of their own destinies. Freedom is important to humans as it allows people to be morally responsible for their actions which are freely performed.

*Can you think of times when may people not be responsible for their actions? Give examples.*

**Activity:** Which out of the following 6 entities have free choices and why?

- 1) A snooker ball is struck by another and moves across the table
- 2) A leaf falls off the tree, swinging one way and then another before reaching the ground
- 3) Two dice are thrown in the air and land on the ground
- 4) A lump of rice melts in the sun
- 5) A man in a prison cell selects a book from a book shelf
- 6) A teenager surfs the internet

## **Freewill: Key Points**

- **Libertarians believe we have freewill and make uncaused choices. We are therefore responsible for our own actions**
- **Libertarians believe that cause and effect do not exist in the mental realm, therefore our decisions cannot be caused by anything.**
- **Cause and reason are different. Reason is how decisions are made in the mental realm. Cause is how things happen in the physical realm.**
- **Libertarianism is not the same as randomness**
- **Descartes believed we have freewill. He was a dualist and believed that we are made up of mind and body. As the mind is not matter, it is free from the world of determinism, cause and effect.**
- **Satre believed we have freewill as we have a consciousness. This makes us aware of possibilities, including those in the future. We can therefore choose our futures.**

Are you a libertarian? Why/why not?