**A-level Religious Education**

**(Philosophy, Ethics and Christianity)**



**Bridging Course - Week 1**

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****St Mary’s Catholic School

A-level Religious Education Bridging Course

**Entry Requirements for Studying A-level Religious Education?**

* Students who are expected to achieve at least a grade 6 in GCSE Religious Education.
* Students who have enjoyed their GCSE Religious Education course, and who are keen readers.
* Students who enjoy asking or posing questions of their own to show their own viewpoint.
* Students who love a lively debate and discussion in lessons, and who are willing, and able, to share their ideas.
* Students who enjoy planning and writing essays.

**What to expect from A-level Religious Education.**

A-level Religious Education is demanding and rewarding in equal measure. Topics that are studied are challenging ones that will pose many questions. These questions are often philosophical, or contentious leading lessons to be filled with discussion and debate. Students are expected to complete substantial amounts of reading and preparation for lessons, in order to engage fully with class discussion. Students should expect to prepare and complete exam questions regularly, and these questions will often present some form of debate, asking students ‘to what extent do you agree?’ Therefore, engagement with class debate is essential in order to be fully prepared for the demands of writing academic and advanced level essays. Religious Education will make you ask important questions about society, about morality, about religion and about yourself.

**This bridging course will provide you with a mixture of information about A-level Religious Education, and what to expect from the course, as well as key work to complete. Students who are expecting to study Religious Education at A-level, and are likely to meet the entry requirements, must complete the bridging course fully and thoroughly, to the best of their ability. You should complete all work on paper and keep it in a file, in an ordered way. You will submit it to your teacher in September. All of the work will be reviewed and selected work will be assessed, and you will be given feedback on it. This work will be signalled to you. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the school and appropriate resources will be sent to you. If you are thinking about studying Religious Education at A-level you should attempt this work to see whether or not you think studying a subject like this is right for you. If you later decide to study Religious Education, you must ensure you complete this work in full. This work should be completed after you have read and completed the Study Skills work that all of Year 12 should complete.**

**Course outline**

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| **Paper 1 – Philosophy of Religion - worth (33.3%)** | **Paper 2 – Religious Ethics – worth 33.3%** |
| * An exam lasting 2 hours. * **Q1 – Explore** question which tests knowledge of the topic. It is worth 8 marks. * **Q2 – Assess** question which tests knowledge but mainly the ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of attitudes. A conclusion is to be reached. This is worth 12 marks. * **Q3a – Clarify** question which is related to the one of the extracts from the Anthology. This is worth 10 marks. * **Q3b – Analyse** question which is linked to 3b. Explore attitudes and consider the strengths and weaknesses of such attitudes reaching a conclusion. It is work 20 marks. * **Q4 – Evaluate** question where a statement is evaluated and consideration is given to the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments. There must be a clear link to another paper on the course. This question is worth 30 marks.   **Philosophy topics** – Design Argument, Cosmological Argument, Ontological Argument, Religious Experience, Problem of Evil, Religious Language, Radio Debate between Copleston and Russell, Life after death and Religion and Science methodologies. | * An exam lasting 2 hours. * **Q1 – Explore** question which tests knowledge of the topic. It is worth 8 marks. * **Q2 – Assess** question which tests knowledge but mainly the ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of attitudes. A conclusion is to be reached. This is worth 12 marks. * **Q3a – Clarify** question which is related to the one of the extracts from the Anthology. This is worth 10 marks. * **Q3b – Analyse** question which is linked to 3b. Explore attitudes and consider the strengths and weaknesses of such attitudes reaching a conclusion. It is work 20 marks. * **Q4 – Evaluate** question where a statement is evaluated and consideration is given to the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments. There must be a clear link to another paper on the course. This question is worth 30 marks.   **Religion and Ethics topics** – Environmental Issues, Equality, Utilitarianism, Situation Ethics, Natural Law, War and Peace, Sexual Ethics, Meta-Ethics, the relationship between religion and morality, comparison of Kant and Aristotle with regard to Deontology and Virtue Ethics, Issues in medical ethics with a focus on beginning and end of life debates. |
| **Paper 3 - Christianity – worth 33.3%**   * An exam lasting 2 hours. * **Q1 – Explore** question which tests knowledge of the topic. It is worth 8 marks. * **Q2 – Assess** question which tests knowledge but mainly the ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of attitudes. A conclusion is to be reached. This is worth 12 marks. * **Q3a – Clarify** question which is related to the one of the extracts from the Anthology. This is worth 10 marks. * **Q3b – Analyse** question which is linked to 3b. Explore attitudes and consider the strengths and weaknesses of such attitudes reaching a conclusion. It is work 20 marks. * **Q4 – Evaluate** question where a statement is evaluated and consideration is given to the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments. There must be a clear link to another paper on the course. This question is worth 30 marks.   **Christianity topics** – Nature of God as personal and creator, The Trinity, the nature of the Church, key moral principles, the Bible, nature and role of Jesus, diversity of practice in the Eucharist and in creative expressions of religious identity, Science, Secularisation, New Religious Movements, Atonement Theory, attitudes of Barth and Hick, Pluralism and Equality and discrimination (gender). | |

The following work requires a lot of reading, and some of the ideas might be challenging to understand on first reading. Remember to take regular breaks, go back to any of the tasks after some time away, and try your best. Your Religious Education Teacher will go over the following with you in lessons, early in Year 12.

1. You are now going to begin preparatory work relevant for Paper 1 of the A-level. Paper 1 is an exam that focuses on various elements within Philosophy. You have already studied some of the topics at GCSE which will give you a good foundation on which to build your knowledge.

We are going to begin with Religious Experience.

1. Have a look at the picture below. Read the information about the painting and complete the questions.



This is a painting called *The Blind Girl* by John Everett Millais.

The two women in the painting are believed to be sisters,

one of whom is a blind musician. They are resting by the

roadside after a rainstorm before travelling on into the town

which can be seen in the background of the painting. This

painting has been interpreted as a way of contrasting the experiences of the blind woman and the sighted sister.

**Consider these questions:**

1. What may the blind woman be able to experience? Think about sound, touch, smell.
2. What may the sighted girl experience? Will it be the same as her sister who is blind? Why? How?
3. Are these two sisters having the same experience of the same environment? How do think this may relate to Religious Experiences?

1. **Different types of Religious Experiences**

At GCSE you studied four types of Religious Experience. These were:

* Prayer
* Numinous
* Mysticism
* Conversion

1. Read the following information which explores each of these ways in more detail. Highlight key points as you read the information. Complete the questions relating to the information.

**Prayer and meditation**

**Theists** describe ***prayer*** as a conversation with God. Prayer can be silent or said out loud. It can use set words, or a person's own words. There are many different kinds of prayer. Prayer deepens a person's faith and can help the believer come to a greater understanding of God's purpose for their lives. God is believed to respond to prayer in different ways. For some Christians, ***meditation*** (or contemplation/ deep reflective thought) is a way of trying to reach a higher spiritual level. For example Roman Catholics, use a rosary to meditate on the life of Jesus. However, meditation is not as important for theists as it is for monists.

**Monists: *prayer*** is less significant in the ﻿monistic tradition﻿ because the believer isn't seeking a personal relationship with the divine. Hindus refer to prayer as prarthana. This may be prayer asking or thanking the divine for blessings in life - adoration, thanksgiving and petition, but confession and intercession play less of a part. ***Meditation*** is an important part of the monistic tradition, where the divine is believed to be a universal truth rather than a personal being. For example, Buddhist meditation helps clear the mind so that negative thoughts of anger or hatred can be replaced with positive ones of loving-kindness and peace. Buddhists hope to develop insight so that they can see the true nature of things.

**Conversion**

**‘**the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self, hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes united and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities’ **- William James**

Conversion is adopting a new religious belief that differs from a previously-held belief (or no belief at all). When the effects of a religious experience are life-changing they trigger conversion. This may be dramatic, for example the conversion of St Paul on the road to Damascus, or simply a gradual realisation. They have great power for the individual concerned, but would not necessarily convince others. They should result in the person leading a better life.

Conversions can come about in two ways:

**Conscious and voluntary experience:** this is gradual conversion, or the volitional type (freely chosen)

**Involuntary and unconscious experience:** this is a sudden conversion, or the self-surrender type (much more passive).

There are three different types of conversions:   
**Intellectual conversions:** a change in the way of thinking about religion

**Moral conversions:** a change in behaviour, rejecting a destructive lifestyle in favour of a new, better one.

**Social conversions:** acceptance of a new social group and way of worship.

**Mysticism**

Mystical experiences are where the recipient feels a sense of union ("one-ness") with the divine. Mysticism involves the recognition of truths beyond normal understanding. Mysticism is therefore both ineffable (indescribable in ordinary language) and noetic (communicating knowledge of the divine) - a strange combination! The Second Vatican Council (1962) declared that mysticism was part of the *general call to holiness* and is available to all believers. However, historically In the **theistic** tradition, mystics tend to be unusual people outside the mainstream of society and religious organisations often distrust them. In the **monistic tradition**, mysticism is much more widely accepted. Sant Dariya Saheb is a Hindu mystic who preached pacifism and vegetarianism and peaceful coexistence between Hindus and Muslims. Buddhist vipassana meditation aims to bring about mystical insights. These practices are accepted and trusted in Eastern religion.  
  
Teresa of Ávila (1515 –1582), was a Spanish noblewoman who chose a monastic life in the [Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church). She had many mystical experiences. Her most famous vision was the subject of a statue by Bernini:   
  
"I would see beside me, on my left hand, an angel in bodily form ... He was not tall, but short, and very beautiful, his face so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest types of angel who seem to be all afire ... In his hands I saw a long golden spear and at the end of the iron tip I seemed to see a point of fire. With this he seemed to pierce my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he drew it out, I thought he was drawing them out with it and he left me completely afire with a great love for God. The pain was so sharp that it made me utter several moans; and so excessive was the sweetness caused me by the intense pain that one can never wish to lose it, nor will one's soul be content with anything less than God."

**Numinous**

**Rudolph Otto (The Idea of the Holy):** Otto pointed out that a central element of direct experiences of God was an **“apprehension of the wholly other”** which Otto called the **“Numinous”.** By this Otto meant the world that is beyond the physical observable universe in which we live. Hence, Otto refers to direct experiences of God as experiences of the **“wholly other”** – meaning they are completely outside of our possible knowledge and experience. Otto uses the Latin phrase mysterium tremendum et fascinans (a terrifying and compelling mystery) to explain something which is so totally other. An experience of awe, dread, wonder and rapture. For Otto Religious experiences have something different about them which sets them apart from all other experiences and induces a feeling of human nothingness when faced with such a powerful being, so the numinous experience is felt on an emotional level.

Some philosophers regard the numinous as a feature of all religious experience, but some classify it as a ‘type’ in its own right and contrast it with mystical experience, where the experient feels one-ness with the divine rather than separation from it.

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| An example of a numinous experience is The vision of Isaiah ([Isaiah 6: 1-5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+6%3A1-5&version=NIV)). In this passage, the Prophet Isaiah enters the Temple after the death of his king and sees a vision of God there: |

I saw the LORD, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.  Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:  
“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
    the whole earth is full of his glory.”  
At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.  
“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

**Task to complete**

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| **Prayer and Meditation**   * Define prayer and meditation * Explain why prayer is more important in theism than monism * Explain why meditation is more important in monism than theism. * Give examples | **Mysticism**   * Define mysticism * Why do you think mystics have often been viewed with suspicion (at least initially) in the theistic tradition? * Why do you think the monastic tradition finds it much easier to embrace the experiences of mystics? * Give an example |
| **Conversion**   * Define conversion and explain the two ways in which a conversion can happen. * What are the three different types of conversion? * Do you think that a sudden or gradual conversin experience is likely to have a more lasting impact on an individual? Why? * Give an example | **Numinous**   * Define Numinous * Name the philosopher who described religious experiences as numinous. * Define mysterium tremendum et fascinans. * How is a numinous experience different to a mystical experience? * Give an example |

1. Watch this short clip from National Geographic Brain Games programme. What role do you think our brains play in a religious experience? Do they have a role to play or is it simply God?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSnI6QuaDDw>

1. Now, we shall look at some scholars in more detail. These scholars will either support the idea that Religious Experiences do happen and come from God or some will challenge the idea of such experiences arguing that it more likely we as humans have made a mistake or they are simply the results of our minds.
2. Read the information about William James’ four characteristics of Religious Experiences. Consider as you do so, do you agree with him and do you think that there are any characteristics missing? Ensure that you are clear about the four characteristics as you will be applying them to some actual religious experiences.

He investigated a large number of accounts of Religious Experiences people have. He assumed that religious experience was the source of religious institutions such as churches. Churches, for James, were secondary to each individual person’s religious experiences. James suggested that religious experiences were events which were solitary and in which individuals experienced the divine.

James notes that the experience has great authority for the person who has them and can often have a marked effect in a person’s life. He noted that whether gradual or sudden conversion experiences are characterised by religious beliefs becoming central to a person’s life and thus in turn affects their behaviour.

One of James’ achievements was to identify some of the characteristics of religious experiences as being wide ranging as visions to feelings of God’s presence. James noted for example, that many people’s religious experiences are marked by a loss of anxiety, the gaining of new knowledge and a changed understanding of the world. Four characteristics were found to be particularly prominent in mystical religious experiences of God:

(1) **PASSIVE**

Experiences were not under the control of the mystic. The experience is something that

happens to the mystic and is from God. James saw this as evidence against arguments

claiming that a religious experience can be explained by saying a person willed it.

(2)**INEFFABLE** The direct experience of God goes beyond human powers of description.

(3) **NOETIC** Refers to the fact that mystics receive knowledge of God that is not otherwise

available. In this sense religious experiences are direct revelations from God.

(4**) TRANSIENT** They are not permanent. The effects of the experience are long-lasting and

involve a changed view of the universe and the mystic’s place in the universe.

***(TIP – You could remember this as P.I.N.T)***

1842 - 1910

1. Now that you know about the four characteristics highlighted by William James found in Religious Experiences, have a read of the following experiences and apply the four characteristics to these. How easy do you find it to do? Is there another element of the experience the person had that James does not include?

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**St Teresa of Avila** was a mystic. She had many religious experiences and extracts from two of her encounters are over the page. Annotate each extract highlighting James’ four characteristics.

**Extract 1**

"One day, when I was at prayer, the Lord was pleased to reveal to me nothing but His hands, the beauty of which was so great as to be indescribable ... A few days later I also saw that Divine face, which seemed to leave me completely absorbed." And finally: "There stood before me the most sacred Humanity in the full beauty and majesty of His resurrected body ... " The visions were lit by an unearthly light: "It is a light so different from what we know here below that the sun's brightness seems dim by comparison ... It is like looking upon very clear water running over a bed of crystal and reflecting the sun, compared with a very muddy stream running over the earth beneath a cloudy sky. It seems rather to be natural light, whereas the other is artificial."

**Extract 2**

"I would see beside me, on my left hand, an angel in bodily form ... He was not tall, but short, and very beautiful, his face so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest types of angel who seem to be all afire ... In his hands I saw a long golden spear and at the end of the iron tip I seemed to see a point of fire. With this he seemed to pierce my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he drew it out, I thought he was drawing them out with it and he left me completely afire with a great love for God. The pain was so sharp that it made me utter several moans; and so excessive was the sweetness caused me by the intense pain that one can never wish to lose it, nor will one's soul be content with anything less than God."

What else could have caused such experiences for St Teresa of Avila?

1. **M.A Persinger and the God-Helmet**

**Read the following information.**

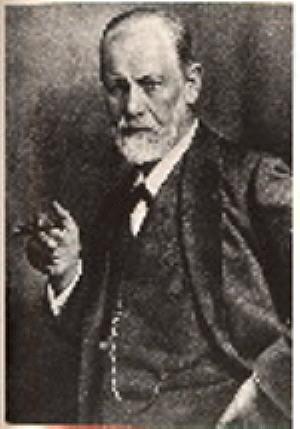
The God Helmet is a popular name given to a laboratory apparatus originally called the "Koren Helmet", after Stanley Koren of Laurentian University's Neuroscience Department, who built it according to specifications provided by Dr. M.A. Persinger, it's director. Dr Persinger passed away in August of 2018. The Shiva God Helmet is still available.

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| The Koren Helmet applies complex (having an irregular shape) magnetic signals to the head of the person who is wearing it. The fields don't work by inducing current in the brain. They have patterns that bear information, and magnetic fields that appear around electrical activity in the brain pick it up. | | | |
| It's a field-to-field interaction, and not [current induction](http://www.ndt-ed.org/EducationResources/CommunityCollege/EddyCurrents/Physics/inductance.htm). The fields pass into the brain, unaffected by the scalp or skull, because there is no such thing as a magnetic insulator. Nothing can block a magnetic field [1](http://www.physlink.com/education/AskExperts/ae512.cfm)  [2](http://www.lessemf.com/faq-shie.html#Lead-Copper). Some psychologists, not understanding this, have mistakenly claimed that the fields used in the God Helmet aren't strong enough to reach the brain. Magnetic fields pass "through all head structures with no attenuation and can stimulate the brain without discomfort" [reference](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7990740). The mechanism where low-intensity magnetic fields influence the brain has been known for years | | | |
| An [independent God Helmet study](http://sacredneurology.com/2015/06/07/god-helmet-and-many-other-of-our-results-have-been-replicated-a-blog-by-dr-michael-a-persinger/) found that its effects *are* [*not* from suggestibility](https://god-helmet.com/god-helmet/god_helmet_is_not_debunked.htm), and that they do indeed have an influence on the brain. The subjects (in this recent and independent study) who received the magnetic fields spoke about their experiences in different ways than those who received no fields. The apparatus used in this new study was not identical to the Koren Helmet, but it still produced measurable effects in spite of its limitations. ([Research Publication](https://www.scribd.com/doc/267811996/God-Helmet-Replication-Study)) Further replication is found in a [recent experiment](http://sacredneurology.com/2014/11/09/olaf-blankes-robot-ghost-the-artificial-spirit/) where researchers were able to artifically induce the sense of a presence using robotic stimulation, and concluded that this sensation is the result of activity in specific brain areas, and not actual ghosts, just as Persinger concluded from his experiments. There are a few points of agreement, in spite of their very different research methods. | | |
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| The Koren Helmet is connected to a PC computer through a 'black box' that cycles the signals through four coils on each side of the head, above over the place where the temporal lobes of the brain meet the parietal lobes. This is the area of the brain many researchers feel is the source of spiritual and religious experiences [link](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?Db=pubmed&Cmd=ShowDetailView&TermToSearch=6664802&ordinalpos=16&itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum). |

**Make a list of challenges that you think the findings from the God-Helmet make against Religious Experiences being from God.**

**How may someone still argue that the God-Helmet does not disprove that Religious Experiences are from God?**

 **Sigmund Freud challenges Religious Experiences**. He says:

* The mystic’s religious experience is a desire to return to the bliss of being an

infant.

* It is sustained by fear of the superior power of fate.
* Religion is an illusion and an “obsessional neurosis”
* God is something made by man to project our guilt upon and so make

ourselves feel better

Read this article on Religious Experience which explains in more detail the view of Sigmund Freud regarding his view of Religious Experiences.

Make notes on the challenges Freud makes and how William James responds to some of the challenges.

Who do you agree with most and why?

FREUD: A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION In The Future of an Illusion, Sigmund Freud presents a different explanation of what might be happening in religious experiences. He argues that they could be hallucinations, like dreams, caused by a very deep unconscious wish that human beings have. This wish goes back in history to the emergence of the human race, and in each individual, to their earliest infancy. The wish is for consolation and reassurance.

In the face of the uncontrollable forces of nature, we feel vulnerable, afraid and frustrated that there is so little we can do. We want to rob life of its terrors. Likewise, when we are infants, we are completely helpless and dependent and need protection. Both motives come together in the thought that there is a God, a protector, a means by which we can control nature (for early religions) or feel safe in the face of danger and uncertainty. Our relationship to God takes on the intimacy and intensity of our relationship to our parents.

Religious beliefs are ‘fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes.’ Isn’t it remarkable, he says, that religion describes the universe ‘exactly as we are bound to wish it to be’? A belief that is based on a wish, rather than on evidence, Freud calls an ‘illusion’. It isn’t necessarily false; it’s just that it isn’t based on seeking the truth.

Just as religious beliefs are based on wishes, so religious experiences are as well. Freud argues that dreams are caused by deep desires we are unaware of, and he argues that religious experiences are similarly caused. They are hallucinations that happen when we are awake, caused by the wish for security and meaning, for things to ‘be ok’.

Freud’s theory seems to account for many of the characteristics James noted about religious experiences. If they are hallucinations, then we can expect them to be experiences, rather than thoughts, in which the person seems to be aware of something directly. Given the nature of the wish, we can expect them to involve intense feelings; and because the wish is abstract, they won’t be particularly related to any mode of perception. They will feel like there is something beyond or outside oneself that can offer security, upon which one can depend.

**Objections James argues that Freud’s theory doesn’t undermine the possibility that religious experiences are experiences of God.**

1. We can’t evaluate the truth of an experience just by its origin. We should look at its effects, its place in our lives. We must evaluate it by other things we feel are important and what we know to be true. Religious experiences produce real effects, which are positive.

2. We can agree that religious experiences come to us in the first instance from the unconscious. But it is entirely possible that the unconscious is a conduit of spiritual reality. Almost everyone who believes in a spiritual dimension to human beings thinks this goes beyond what we are aware of.

3. Even if religious experiences are caused by a wish for security and meaning, if God does exist and we do need him, then our wish for contact with God would be realistic – if we are made by God, then a relationship with God would be one of our deepest desires. The wish Freud identifies may not be the result only of the experiences he describes.

Freud would agree with much of this. Knowing why an artist paints may be no help at all in saying whether the painting is beautiful; knowing why a scientist dedicates their life to research won’t tell us if what they discover is true. Freud only argues that religious experience, in itself, gives us no reason to think it is an experience of God. It is perfectly possible for religious experience to have an entirely psychological cause, and seem exactly as it does now. Until we have some independent reason to think God exists, then we cannot use religious experience to support the claim that God exists.

Another objection is that Freud’s account of religion is inadequate. For instance, religion is not as comforting as he supposes. This issue is discussed in the handout ‘Can social science ‘explain away’ religion?’.

**4. Bringing all of your work together complete these exam style questions using the guidance you have been given. It is these answers that will be marked and detailed feedback given.**

Explore the various types of Religious Experience (8)

*Guidance for answering this style of question:*

* *This is simply asking for your knowledge and so you just need to write information. Evaluation of points made is not needed.*
* *Four detailed paragraphs are needed. Each paragraph should make a point and then give detailed explanations with examples.*
* *A conclusion is not needed.*

Assess the challenges that the God-Helmet provides against Religious Experiences being from God. (12)

*Guidance for answering this style of question:*

* *This question is asking you to show your knowledge of the thinking of Persinger and his findings from the God-Helmet.*
* *The question is also asking you to give some challenges that the God-Helmet makes against Religious Experiences being from God. Have 4 challenges to write about in this answer.*
* *You will need 6 paragraphs. (1) Set the scene about Persinger and the God-Helmet (2) – (5) Give your challenge that the God-Helmet raises and then provide some more evidence that would support this argument but also look at what evidence or arguments may challenge this view. By doing this you are ASSESSING the arguments which is what the question is asking for.*
* *Paragraph (6) should be a conclusion where you pull everything together and share a view of which side appears to be the strongest based on the arguments you have assessed.*

**Answers and suggestions**

From task 1 – The painting of *The Blind Girl* by John Everett Millais

1. **What may the blind woman be able to experience? Think about sound, touch, smell.**

The Blind woman will be able to feel the warmth of the sun on her face and back. She will be able to hear the noises of the sheep in the field, birds flying by and other elements of nature. She has no visual distractions and so relies on touch as well as sound. She is holding some grass in her hand and this will give her a sense and texture of her surroundings. A butterfly is resting on her shoulder which shows that she is totally at ease and has a sense of stillness.

1. **What may the sighted girl experience? Will it be the same as her sister who is blind? Why? How?**

The sighted girl will struggle to see fully as the sun shines brightly and so she shields her face. She can see the double rainbow in the background. She is able to see how far away the town is and so can understand the distance still left to travel. She may miss some things that her sister experiences simply because there is possibly too much to take in and the brightness of the sun causes a problem. The sister may take things for granted that the blind girl does not.

1. **Are these two sisters having the same experience of the same environment? How do think this may relate to Religious Experiences?**

No, they are not having the same experience. The blind girl has little to distract her and so she can experience it fully compared to her sister. Some elements of what they experience may be the same but **HOW** it is experienced is very different. This related to Religious Experience because people can look at the same thing but interpret it very differently. Religious Experience generally needs stillness and an openness to the experience itself. More senses are being used by the blind girl than by the sighted sister.

From task 2 – The different types of Religious Experiences

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| **Prayer and Meditation**   * **Define prayer and meditation**   *Prayer is a conversation with God which can be silent or out loud. A person can use set words or their own.*  *Meditation is being in deep thought or contemplation. It is a way of reaching a higher level.*   * **Explain why prayer is more important in theism than monism**   *In Monism the person is not seeking a personal relationship with God but this is the basis of a theist belief. It allows a theist to come to know the purpose God may have for their lives.*   * **Explain why meditation is more important in monism than theism.**   *For monists, meditation allows for the divine to be seen as a universal truth rather than a personal being. It allows for the development if insight to be found.*   * **Give examples**   *Buddhists meditate following the example of Buddha who reached enlightenment.*  *Catholics use the rosary which has key prayers as part of it such as the Hail Mary, Our Father, Apostles’ Creed* | **Mysticism**   * Define mysticism   *Mysticism is having an experience of being at one with the divine. It involves seeing truths that are beyond our normal understanding. Experiences are ineffable and noetic.*   * Why do you think mystics have often been viewed with suspicion (at least initially) in the theistic tradition?   *Mystics tended to be unusual people. Religious organisations distrusted them and others would have followed this authority that the religious organisation held.*   * Why do you think the monistic tradition finds it much easier to embrace the experiences of mystics?   *Mysticism is being one with the divine and this is an element of meditation also. To discover the truths.*   * Give an example   *St Teresa of Avila was a mystic who had visions and found them to be ineffable and noetic.*  *Buddhists meditate to reach enlightenment and universal truths.* |
| **Conversion**   * Define conversion and explain the two ways in which a conversion can happen.   *It is adopting a new religious belief that is different from a previous held belief.*  *A conversion could be conscious and voluntary which means that is takes place over time and the person is freely choosing to be converted.*  *A conversion could also be Involuntary and unconscious which means it is a sudden experience and the person surrenders themselves to such an experience.*   * What are the three different types of conversion?   *Intellectual – a person changes they way think about religions*  *Moral – there is a change in behaviour from the person*  *Social – there is an acceptance of a new social group and way of worship*   * Do you think that a sudden or gradual conversion experience is likely to have a more lasting impact on an individual? Why?   This is your own view but I would say that there are arguments on both sides. For something to happen so suddenly could be very powerful but a person may question if they had made a mistake. A conversion which happens over time involves the person more and so they are more conscious of its effects and the changes taking place.   * Give an example   *St Paul on the road to Damascus has a sudden conversion and he went on to support the early church spreading the word of God.*  *A person who did not believe in God but attended Church over a year to support someone else and then converted themselves to the faith.* | **Numinous**   * Define Numinous   *“Apprehension of the Wholly Other”*  *Sense that there is a presence of something greater than me.*   * Name the philosopher who described religious experiences as numinous.   *Rudolph Otto*   * Define mysterium tremendum et fascinans.   It means, “a terrifying and compelling mystery.”   * How is a numinous experience different to a mystical experience?   *The numinous is felt on an emotional level and so in an experience a person can feel separate from this higher being. In mysticism, the person becomes one with the higher being*.   * Give an example   *The prophet Isaiah had a vision where he entered the Temple and saw the presence of God.* |