

Teaching Brief: God

The intended purpose of this document is to provide guidance and assistance in the delivery of philosophy sessions covering content featured in the AQA AS Philosophy topic, 'The Idea of God'. Whilst the structure and content maps onto the AQA topic, it is hoped that the document will be useful for tutors operating in different educational contexts, who can still make good use of the materials presented here.

Overview

The concept of God has been a focal point for philosophical thinking, writing and discourse since the beginnings of philosophy itself. The branch of the discipline, now referred to as 'Philosophy of Religion', draws key questions regarding the existence and nature of 'God' from the ancient world, most notably from Plato and Aristotle. The idea that there exists a supreme being has been a potent one and the attempted proofs offered up, along with a plethora of proposed attributes of God, have generated much intense debate amongst philosophers. Many take philosophy to be the domain of the wholly rational and thus view the concept of a faith-based God as intolerable, whilst others see the divine as the cornerstone of being itself, of which philosophy is simply a part. It's a long story and, to many, there is much at stake – do we live in a universe created and sustained by a God who, perhaps, provides meaning, purpose and morality or do we occupy a god-less universe, barren of the aforementioned, alone and reliant only upon ourselves? Such a dichotomy draws into sharp focus the loftiness of the questions we are dealing with.

Whilst attempts have been made to formulate proofs for the existence of God grounded in empirical observation of the world, such as the teleological argument (just as a watch if dismantled shows clear signs of a creator through its purposeful, mechanistic components, the complex, intricate workings of the universe also demonstrates the existence of a creator), our concerns lie with a different approach – attempts to prove the existence of God through *reason* rather than experience (in philosophical terms, a priori (without or before experience) rather than a posteriori (with or after experience)). Specifically, this brief focuses on variations of what became known as the ontological argument for God's existence, which holds that the concept of God itself necessarily involves existence, along with key criticisms.

Many philosophers have rejected all such 'proofs', arguing that the concept of God does not have divine origins but is instead, as Nietzsche put it, 'human, all too human'. Social and/or psychological processes have been offered up as explanations for the derivation and proliferation of the idea of God. Coverage of these alternative explanations and their respective problems forms the final section of the teaching brief.

The three main sections of this document are then as follows:

1. The attributes of God
2. The Ontological Argument
3. 'God' as the product of social and psychological processes

For each of these sections, key points are provided along with further explanation; suggested readings; questions for reflection, discussion, and essay writing; and advice for delivering lessons/sessions on the topic.

1. The Attributes of God

In contemplating and discussing the concept of 'God', philosophers and theologians have often concluded that the divine being possesses certain attributes, characteristics for which it would be logically incoherent to deny. A selection of key attributes are explained below with difficulties and tensions highlighted.

- **God as omnipotent**

It has been argued that, if God exists as a perfect being, then it follows that he is omnipotent. The translation of the term has led to a number of differing interpretations of what is meant by omnipotence – does 'all powerful' mean 'power over all things' or 'the ability to do anything'? The latter interpretation has been met with various questions regarding what God is capable of, which seem to highlight real problems with this supposed attribute. For example, is it possible for God to create a stone so heavy that even He cannot lift it? If he is, then there is something he does not have the power to do (lift the created stone); if he isn't, then there is likewise something he is powerless to accomplish (creation of the stone). The former interpretation doesn't appear to fare any better as, whilst power over all things might not imply possession of the ability to do *anything* (or are we dealing with semantics here?), anything less than such an ability would be incompatible with God's perfection. If there are certain actions that cannot be performed, then this would be an imperfection.

However, philosophers and theologians have leapt to the defence of omnipotence as an attribute of God. Aquinas argued that examples such as the 'paradox of the stone' are in fact nonsensical. Making a square circle, making $2 + 2 = 5$, making a bachelor a married man, making a stone too heavy for the perfect being to lift – all of these 'tasks' are, he argues, pseudo-tasks, which are, when examined, devoid of meaningful content. As such, the questioning of whether God is able to perform such things is meaningless and so doesn't in fact undermine His omnipotence.

Further reading/resources:

Summa Theologica, St. Thomas Aquinas, First Part, Question 25, Article 3 : 'Whether God is omnipotent?' http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.FP_Q25_A3.html

This section of Aquinas's magnum opus articulates a number of possible criticisms of the attribute of omnipotence, followed by his defences.

The Catholic Encyclopaedia, 'Omnipotence' <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11251c.htm>

The impressive online Catholic encyclopaedia gives an excellent, concise overview of omnipotence, essentially summarising the key arguments of Aquinas.

Vardy & Arliss (2004), *The Thinker's Guide to God*, John Hunt Publishing, Chapter 7, 'The Attributes of God'

This very accessible text is student-friendly and addresses omnipotence well, explaining a number of Aquinas's arguments clearly, as well as covering Descartes and some contemporary philosophers on the issue.

Discussion Questions:

What would it mean for something to be omnipotent?

Is it possible for something to be omnipotent?

- **God as omniscient/God as eternal or everlasting**

A second attribute which has been argued for is omniscience, meaning that God is all-knowing; a prevalent interpretation of this being that God knows all true propositions (statements) or every proposition that it is logically possible to know. If we are to understand God as the perfect being, then it seems that this would involve omniscience as to not know something would be a deficiency, an imperfection.

However, if God knows everything, then he knows what my future actions will be. As such, how can I be free to make genuine decisions in life, choosing between different courses of action, if God already has the foreknowledge of what I will do? If I do not have genuine freedom, then in what sense can I be held morally responsible for the outcomes of my actions? Whilst there are traditions which embrace this concept of 'pre-destination' (e.g. Calvinists), many have argued that this is incompatible with key tenets of monotheistic religions, focussing on the agent's ability to freely choose good over evil and to embrace God rather than reject Him. Another problem is that of evil in the world – if God has foreknowledge of such activity, doesn't he bear responsibility for this?

As with other proposed divine attributes, much depends upon an important distinction – is it the case that God is a simple being, existing *outside* of time or an everlasting being, existing *within* time? If the former, then there is no past or future for God as He experiences all things in an eternal present. Aquinas argued that this was the case, whereby it is God's foreknowledge that causes events to take place. As the divine creator, what occurs is inextricably bound up with a 'divine plan', which is experienced as unfolding through time by humans but as an eternal present for God. This model seems to rule out human freedom as everything is predestined. However, St. Augustine argues by analogy that it is possible to know a friend so well that you know how they will react to a situation but this does not mean that you *cause* their reaction. Yet it could be argued this is a weak analogy as God would have omniscience about an individual (and everything within its environment) that was wholly His creation, giving greater weight to the argument that God does hold causal responsibility and humans lack free will.

If the latter, with God being everlasting rather than simple, experiencing time as we do, then this opens up the possibility for genuinely free, uncaused choices to be made as God does not have foreknowledge of what will occur in the future. In turn this would allow for individuals to be moral agents with the power to choose between good and evil. Of course, we are now faced with a different tension – if God lacks foreknowledge, is he omnipotent?

Further reading/resources:

Summa Theologica, St. Thomas Aquinas, First Part, Question 14, Article 8: 'Whether the Knowledge of God is the Cause of Things?'

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.FP_Q14_A8.html

Vardy & Arliss (2004), *The Thinker's Guide to God*, John Hunt Publishing, Chapter 7, 'The Attributes of God'

Fairly detailed coverage of the main issues surrounding omniscience with good explanation given of the difficult concept of God being wholly simple.

Pessin, Andrew (2009), *The God Question*, One World Oxford
Relevant sections on Ockham, Molina, Kretzmann, and Swinburne. Readable, humorous and covers other attributes too.

Discussion Questions:

Can an action still be a freely chosen one if there is no possibility of you acting otherwise?
Would it be more consistent for God to be eternal or everlasting?

Exam Questions:

June 2012: Explain and illustrate **two** difficulties with the claim that God is omniscient (15 marks)

January 2012: Outline the view that God is eternal and explain **one** difficulty with this view (15 marks)

- **God as supremely good**

Supreme goodness, often referred to as omnibenevolence is another proposed attribute of God. It is argued that anything less than supreme goodness would be incompatible with the perfection of God. However, this attribute has also been challenged. For example, Plato in his dialogue, Euthyphro, provides us with a dilemma: is what is morally good commanded by God because it is good or is it morally good because God commands it? If it is the former then it seems goodness is something independent of God's will (an imperfection) but if it is the latter, then it seems that moral goodness is arbitrary, subject to the whim of the divine.

Others have challenged the supreme goodness of God by highlighting the 'problem of evil'. The evil that exists within the world is incompatible with a supremely good God – an all powerful omnibenevolent God would only preside over a utopia of goodness if He existed. Also, if God were supremely good, wouldn't He ensure that all humans were uniformly understanding of his will, instead of the evident disagreement of interpretation which abounds?

In the aftermath of atrocities such as Auschwitz, people have questioned how the existence of God can still be affirmed as no omnibenevolent deity would allow for such events to take place. However, some philosophers have sought to provide an explanation. Hans Jonas argues that for reasons unknown to mankind, God, the ultimate ground of being chose to enter into a state of becoming, living temporally through history and forgoing foreknowledge of events. In doing so, God has shared in the suffering of humanity – a personal and compassionate God, unlike the impersonal, abstract God associated with Plato and Aristotle. Whilst Jonas provides an account of how God's existence and Auschwitz can be compatible, this is at the expense of attributes, which many would argue are fundamental to the character of God, namely omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, due to the revocation of his power.

Further reading/resources:

Summa Theologica, St. Thomas Aquinas, First Part, Question 6, Article 2: 'Whether God is the supreme good?'

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.FP_Q6_A2.html

Aquinas locks horns with a number of objections to omnibenevolence as an attribute of God.

Baggini J (2002), *Philosophy: Key Themes*, Palgrave Macmillan, Chapter 4, 'The Problem of Evil'

'Pop philosopher', Julian Baggini provides a succinct account of arguments surrounding the 'problem of evil'

Discussion Questions:

Does evil in the world rule out the possibility of a supremely good God?

Exam Questions:

January 2011: Explain **two** criticisms of the view that God is supremely good, the source of moral laws and goodness (15 marks)

- **God as transcendent and immanent**

Given that human beings exist in an imperfect, temporal, and contingent universe, many have argued that God (as perfect, eternal, and necessary) must exist transcendent or 'beyond' our world. Language itself, as a human construct, is limited and so any concept will fail to capture fully the nature of God. However, language is our inescapable vehicle of communication and as God is purportedly infinite, He is to be found in all things, including the objects and events which our terms denominate. In this sense, it is said that God is immanent.

Some question whether transcendence and immanence are in fact compatible. If God is transcendent and is outside of the imperfect, ever-changing world we occupy, in what sense can He interact or engage with it? Wouldn't it be logically impossible for the infinite to act upon the finite? However, if we abandon transcendence as an attribute, we are left with a pantheistic God, a deity that is wholly equivocal to the universe (and not outside or beyond it). If we abandon immanence, then we are left with an impersonal and abstract God. Neither of these alternatives is acceptable within the main traditions of Abrahamic faiths.

In addition, there is tension between the attributes of transcendence and God understood as everlasting – if God is in time, then he is not transcendent. Finally, if God is understood as immanent, then how can he be eternal and outside of time?

Further reading/resources:

Jones, Hayward & Cardinal (2008), *Philosophy in Focus: AQA An Introduction to Philosophy*, Hodder Education, Chapter 2, 'The Attributes of God'

Textbook aimed at A-Level students – very accessible, detailed explanation of key arguments, covering key attributes including transcendence and immanence.

Summa Theologica, St. Thomas Aquinas, First Part, Question 8, Article 1: 'Whether God is in all things?'

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.FP_Q8_A1.html

Aquinas tackles several objections regarding God's being within the world.

Discussion Questions:

Is it possible for God to be both transcendent and immanent?

Exam Questions:

June 2011: Briefly explain how, if God is immanent, this may conflict with **three** of his divine attributes (15 marks)

January 2010: Outline **and** illustrate how God's transcendence might conflict with **one** of His other attributes (15 marks)

Teaching Advice:

Students should be able to write clearly about the attributes above, providing precise definitions, along with accompanying examples, and demonstrating awareness of issues concerning whether attributes are coherent singularly and mutually. Mindmapping concepts could be useful here as well as constructing a table comparing attributes (Jones, Hayward & Jones' text provides an excellent example of this on p.103). There is also scope to be a little more creative and get students to write and perform a play in which students represent attributes bidding to be accepted as coherent (Dragons' Den format perhaps?) Another possibility is splitting students into small groups, assigning each student in the group an attribute to research and make notes on, with presentations then delivered to their peers. This method allows for students to gain ownership over their learning but the degree of tutor intervention required will be determined by the character and competency of your cohort.

2. The Ontological Argument

As mentioned in the topic overview, the 'ontological argument' is a supposed proof of God's existence which is drawn not from empirical evidence but from reason alone. The argument has appeared over the centuries in different formulations but the central thrust is that, if God's existence is conceivable, then He must exist. To most, this argument is the most objectionable of all proofs of God, seeming to 'define God into existence'. However, there are contemporary advocates and perhaps its historical longevity reflects a certain resilience to defeat.

C11 theologian, St. Anselm, is usually identified as providing the first formulation of the ontological argument. He argued in his seminal work, Proslogion that God is a 'being than that which nothing greater can be conceived' – as the perfect being, there is no greater concept to be held in the mind. As it is greater to exist in reality rather than just in the mind, he concludes that God must exist. A second form of his argument holds that as God is the greatest possible conceivable being, he must be a necessary being as it is greater to be necessary (cannot not exist) than it is to be contingent (possible to not exist). As He is necessary, he must exist.

Gaunilo of Marmoutiers viewed Anselm's argument as absurd, contending that the same logic could be applied to concepts other than God, leading one to conclude that things exist which obviously do not (reductio ad absurdum). Gaunilo argued that it is possible to conceive of a

perfect island (abundant in coconuts, warm weather etc.) so, by Anselm's logic, it must exist. This ridiculous conclusion serves to undermine the reasoning of the ontological argument. However, Anselm retorted that, as islands are contingent entities, they do not have necessity as an attribute and so the comparison does not stand. It is only the fact that God is the *greatest* conceivable entity that guarantees His existence.

Centuries later, Descartes takes up the mantle of the ontological argument, arguing that as God is a supremely perfect being and existence is a perfection, then He must exist. In the same way as a triangle must have the attribute of being three-sided, so the concept of God must possess the attribute of existence. In analysing the concept, 'God', Descartes concludes that the predicate, 'existence' is included in the subject, 'God' – as such, 'God exists' is deemed to be an analytic proposition, a statement which is true in virtue of the meaning of the terms included in the proposition.

Kant in his 'Critique of Pure Reason' provides powerful criticisms of the ontological argument. Firstly, while he agrees, for argument's sake, that the proposition 'God exists' is analytic, he disagrees that it follows from this that he actually does exist in reality. In the same way that we might say that the statement, 'a centaur is half man-half horse' is analytic, this does not mean that it exists. The most we can say is that *if* a centaur existed, then it would be half man-half horse. The same applies to the concept, 'God' – if He existed, then he would necessarily exist. For Kant, it is mistaken to think that we can move from talking about concepts to claims about what really exists.

His second argument goes further, disputing that existence can actually be meaningfully employed as a predicate. We might conceive for example of a ball with numerous attributes. For example, the ball conceived might be red, round, light etc. But, Kant argues, if you then apply existence as a predicate, this does not add anything to the concept, it doesn't enrich the concept with any additional descriptive content. Kant concludes that 'existence' is not a genuine predicate and so the ontological argument is flawed due to its reliance upon a false premise.

Further reading/resources:

Jones, Hayward & Cardinal (2008), *Philosophy in Focus: AQA An Introduction to Philosophy*, Hodder Education, Chapter 2, 'The Ontological Argument'

A very well explained account of the different manifestations of the ontological argument (including contemporary versions of Malcolm and Plantinga) and key criticisms.

Anselm, *Prologion*, Chapters 2-3

[http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.asp#CHAPTER II](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.asp#CHAPTER%20II)

St. Anselm presents his argument that the fool who understands the concept of God when denying his existence fails to recognise that the concept entails His existence.

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation V

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/descartes/meditations/Meditation5.html>

Descartes explains his account of the ontological argument.

Discussion Questions:

Is it possible to hold a conception of the perfect being?

Can God be defined into existence?

Exam Questions:

January 2012: Assess the claim that God necessarily exists (30 marks)

January 2011: 'A consideration of the idea of God should lead us to conclude that He exists.' (30 marks)

June 2010: Assess whether the ontological argument demonstrates the existence of God (30 marks)

Teaching Advice:

Questions concerning the ontological argument are typically evaluative and require students not only to be familiar with the ontological proof and stock strengths and weaknesses but also to critically evaluate these arguments, in order to construct a reasoned and justified conclusion. Students should then be encouraged to consider possible responses to arguments employed, which will help to develop sustained, critical analysis. Free and open enquiry is useful for this, allowing students to voice their responses and work in critical collaboration to develop their analyses. The 'community of enquiry' model is particularly effective, providing a framework for structured discussion and debate. More info on this can be found on the SAPERE website:

<http://www.sapere.org.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=76>

3. 'God' as the product of social and psychological processes

What is the origin of the idea of God? Is it the case that this concept is hard-wired into us from birth in some way (innate) or is it merely the product of social and psychological processes, and so a human construct? In this final section, we consider both of these positions and their respective strengths and weaknesses.

- **God as an innate idea**

Descartes employed what is sometimes referred to as the 'Trademark Argument' to show that the idea of God is something we are born with. In a nutshell, he argues that he possesses the concept of 'perfection' – this is a concept which he can comprehend – and, as he is an imperfect being, he cannot have been the source of this concept. The principle at work here is that perfection cannot be derived from imperfection. It follows from this that only the perfect being could be the source of the idea of perfection. As such, God exists and the fact that Descartes is able to operate with the concept is the stamp of God, his trademark.

However, some have questioned whether we do actually operate with a genuine concept of perfection. It is one thing to refer to perfection as 'that which is without flaw or weakness' but this can be construed as a negation of the flawed, imperfect objects of our world and not a substantive concept in itself. We can also draw upon the tradition of the mystics in claiming that an understanding of God involves a transcendent experience, which goes beyond all conceptual frameworks. Aquinas argues along these lines, whilst advocates of the 'via negativa' conception

of God argue that we can only meaningfully say of God what he is not, not what he is. Descartes' notion that we are born with a positive conception of the perfect being would be incompatible with this interpretation.

Further criticism can be found within the empiricist tradition. Empiricist philosophers have typically rejected the claim that we can be born/hard-wired with any kind of ideas or knowledge. For example, John Locke argued that all of our mental ideas are derived from sensory experience and that we are born 'tabula rasa' - as blank slates. David Hume, another empiricist, states that 'all ideas are derived from impressions' – that is, all of our concepts have their origin in sensory experience. So, for Locke and Hume, the idea of God is not innate. Perhaps in experiencing the degrees of difference in possession of a quality, we imagine this quality extended infinitely to, for example, give us the idea of perfect goodness. This would show that perfection, and thus the idea of God is rooted in experience rather than innateness.

Further reading/resources:

Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditation III

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/descartes/meditations/Meditation3.html>

Descartes gives his 'trademark argument' for the idea of God as innate.

Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, Chapter II

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke1/Book1a.html#INTRODUCTION>

In this chapter, 'No Innate Speculative Principles', Locke dismisses the possibility of innate ideas.

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section II – Of the Origins of Ideas

<http://18th.eserver.org/hume-enquiry.html#2>

Hume explains his account of the origins of ideas, including the concept of God.

Discussion Questions:

Does Descartes' 'trademark argument' explain the origins of the idea of God?

Are we born tabula rasa (as blank slates)?

Exam Questions:

June 2010: Briefly explain **two** contrasting accounts of how we obtain the idea of God (15 marks)

January 2010: How convincing is the view that the idea of God is innate in all of us? (30 marks)

- **The idea of God as a human construction and projection that emerges from mundane social or psychological processes**

This section focuses on the arguments of those philosophers, psychologists and sociologists who have claimed that the idea of God is not innate but rather it is derived from mundane social or psychological processes. In a nutshell, God did not make man and hard-wire us to operate with the concept of the perfect being but rather the concept is man-made. 'God' does not refer to anything transcendental or divine but can be explained in a wholly natural manner.

As mentioned in the previous section, Hume rejects Descartes' claim that the idea of God is innate. He argues that we project qualities of human experience such as goodness and wisdom without limit, which results in the concept of perfection we label 'God'. It is reflection upon our own experience that gives birth to the concept.

C19 German philosopher, Ludwig Feuerbach gave a similar critique, arguing that humans project their limited qualities on to an externalised all powerful being – a wishful illusion which serves only to alienate us from properly recognising our own attributes. By treating these qualities which we either possess or long to possess as 'other' than ourselves in this concept, 'God', we fail to appreciate the divinity within ourselves. It is the conscious mind itself which is of limitless capacity - this is the infinity which we ascribe to God. Max Stirner, was a contemporary critic of Feuerbach's position, arguing that he was mistakenly ascribing a set of fixed essential human qualities, which needed to be recognised rather than projected onto the 'other' of God. For Stirner, individual human beings are able to freely choose who they are at each moment and so do not have a fixed nature.

Sigmund Freud considered the concept of God to be a product of psychological neurosis with its origin in the experiences of infancy. As children, parents typically function as the God-figures in our lives, providing a framework of meaning, sense, and purpose, whilst being a source of love, protection, knowledge, and justice. As we develop into adults, we come to recognise that our parents cannot protect us from the cruelty, horror and lack of apparent meaning in the world and so we project the formerly held qualities of our parents onto an imaginary transcendental, all powerful deity. Freud argues that we need to overcome this childish wish-fulfilment in order to embrace a mature, rational, scientific understanding of the universe. Criticisms of Freud could include the argument that his analysis is limited and fails to take into account a religion such as Buddhism, which does not include the concept of an all-powerful deity.

Marx's critique of religion is political and is rooted in his theory of economic relations. He argues that, in a capitalist society, religion is a vehicle for ideological manipulation and that the religious message is one that seeks to justify exploitation of the working classes. He famously describes religion as the "opium of the masses", a drug functioning to make people relatively content (or at least put up with) their miserable lot in life. While the capitalist 'owners of the means of production' go on squeezing income and working conditions in order to maximise profit, the proletariat (working class) are fed a diet of religious teaching which tells them that 'the meek will inherit the earth' and that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'. Marx's solution is to bring about a political revolution in order to emancipate the working classes, throwing off their shackles of oppression, which have been held in place by, amongst other things, religion and the fictional concept of 'God'. A possible criticism here might be to consider the manifestations of Christianity which have actively sought to combat the forces of capitalism in order to better the lot of working people – on example would be 'Liberation Theology' in South America – a blending together of Marxism and Christianity.

Further reading/resources:

Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, Introduction

<http://marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/essence/index.htm>

Feuerbach gives an overview of his account of 'God' as a concept born out of human psychology.

Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Introduction

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>

The first few paragraphs here outline Marx's position on the functional role religion plays within society.

Lacewing, Philosophy for AS (online worksheets), 'The Idea of God'

<http://www.routledge.com/cw/alevelphilosophy/s2/idea/>

Excellent online resources for all AS and A2 topics for the course, including here a worksheet on 'Origins of God in Psychology'

Discussion Questions:

Is it possible to demonstrate that the concept of God is a psychological or sociological construct?

If the concept of God is a construct, does this mean that atheism is true?

Exam Questions:

June 2012: Assess the claim that the idea of God is not innate but formed through mundane social and psychological processes (30 marks)

June 2011: 'God did not make man. Man made God' Assess this claim (30 marks)

Teaching Advice:

Other philosophers, psychologists and sociologists could be explored in this section, including Durkheim, Nietzsche and Russell. Examiner's Reports have flagged up the necessity for students to critically discuss these atheistic perspectives if they are to achieve the higher marks, and that attempts to do so have not always been convincing. As such, students should be well prepared with a range of responses to Freud, Marx et al and, to develop sustained, critical engagement, possible defences. In doing so, this will help students to devise a convincing conclusion, which is justified by clear reasons given.

As well as the various course textbooks available, it is worthwhile having a look at the A-Level Religious Studies resources too as, for this topic and others, there is an abundance of relevant material.