

Year 12 Philosophy/RS Summer Work

Please complete all tasks given and bring these to your first Philosophy lesson.

PHILOSOPHY

PART 1

Definitions of Reason and Faith:

- **Reason:** the 'rational' part of the human mind: using logic, establishing facts, reaching conclusions, making judgements, supporting our judgements with reasons.
- **Faith:** trust, or belief, in something or someone (such as God)



Task: Note down examples of decisions, beliefs etc. that are based on reason and do the same with faith. This could be a mind map, list etc.

Question: Which do you think is the most logical when making a decision/reaching a conclusion – faith or reason? Justify your opinion.

PART 2

Research into Plato. Who was he? What ideas did he have? Please particularly find out about his 'allegory of the cave'. Write a summary of the allegory (draw a picture if you want!!!) and then explain what ideas it was trying to get across.

ETHICS

Collect one example of an issue concerning human life and death and **one example** of an issue concerning animal life and death. The BBC News website is a good source for information. **For each issue decide what the ethical dilemma is and what you think is the right thing to do.**

For example, Diane Pretty who had Motor Neurone Disease (MND). She wanted to control the time and manner of her death. Due to her condition, she needed help from her husband to die. She asked the government to guarantee that her husband would not be prosecuted if he helped her die. The House of Lords rejected Diane's case. They said that the right to life did not include a right to die. Diane took her case to the European Court of Human Rights. They said that right to life was not determined by quality of life so could not be interpreted as also giving a right to die.



CHRISTIANITY

This article gets you to reflect on elements across the course – most notably in relation to the Year 12 topic 'God' and Year 13 topic 'Gender and Sexuality' (where you specifically need to critique Hampson's claim that 'Christianity is irredeemably sexist'), as well as linking to the study of Religious Language in Philosophy. With this in mind, read the article 'Is God a Woman?' by Daphne Hampson and use it to answer the questions below:

1. Why does Hampson believe the traditional language and imagery of God is 'toxic' for women?
2. What criticism does Hampson make of the traditional concept of God as Father, Lord, King and Judge?
3. 'The use of male language for God inevitably leads to sexism.' How far do you agree with Hampson's view? Do you take issue with anything she says?

IS GOD A WOMAN?

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND
THE CONCEPT OF GOD



Professor Daphne Hampson held a chair in Post-Christian Thought at the University of St Andrews and is now an Associate of the Department of Theology and Religion at Oxford. She is the author of *Theology and Feminism* and *After Christianity*. She is at present working on a book *Religion as Gender Politics*.



Is God a Man?

Ariana Grande proclaims: 'God is a Woman!'. I propose to think this through. Is God a Man? To consider this initially is enlightening. What — we may ask—has it done to women and to gender relations that God has exclusively been seen as 'male'? We may say we know that God isn't 'actually male' but language is powerful, shaping reality for us — we do not have an experience and then, subsequently, find language, but imagery and language are part and parcel of the experience. What effect has it had that in the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) God has been described using male metaphors? Or, when care has been taken not to be anthropomorphic (giving God human characteristics), the metaphors used for God still reflect positions occupied by men? God is designated Lord, King, Master, Judge (in a society in which all judges were male), Father; metaphors moreover which suggest that 'He' is transcendent, powerful, and rightly to be obeyed and worshipped. In consequence 'woman', or the 'feminine', comes to designate that which is the opposite of, or contrary to, the divine.

Consider this. All men are born of women. Yet in religion, or male mythology, this is reversed. In the biblical story Eve is taken out of Adam, formed from his rib. While in Greek mythology the axe-man chops open Zeus's head (painlessly it is said) and out springs Athena. Giving birth has commonly been held to make a woman unclean. Again, the wonder of birth which many women feel to be a kind of 'creation' is symbolically undermined through the need to 'cleanse' a child through baptism. In all known societies it is women who prepare food on an everyday basis; yet when it comes to the sacred meal, that instrumental role is taken from them. Still today in the vast majority of churches women are forbidden to preside at the Eucharist (Holy Communion). It is women who commonly do the work of cleaning up mess, looking after children, or caring for the sick and elderly. Yet it is normally men who baptise. Thus, religion acts for men to trump women, taking authority away from them by overturning the natural or the social order, while legitimising male authority over women.



Michelangelo's The Creation of Adam, c.1512, The Sistine Chapel

It has apparently seemed only natural to men to see themselves in the image of God. At the centre of Christendom in Rome, where the new pope is chosen by an all-male assembly of cardinals (and they cannot choose a woman), high above them we find Michelangelo's fresco of Adam created in the image of God the Father. No one questions it. But such imagery excludes others; it creates that which is 'other' to the presumption as to what is the norm. This is true in regard to race, not only sex. I vividly recall the impact it made on me when, in 1970 (not long after the civil rights movement in the States), I saw in the church hall of a Black church in the American south a picture of a Black man on the cross, simply called 'Black Christ'. Those people needed to see themselves as created in the image of their God. Who can blame them? Such an image makes a statement as to their worth. But can one do this in the case of women? Sex is the great cutting or division of humanity into two. Symbolically at least, the division of sex is profound.

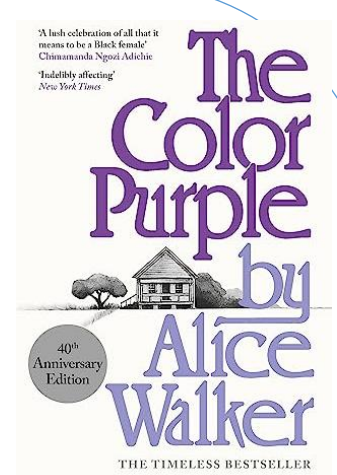
To question the normativity of men and "the male" is disruptive, never more so than in the sphere of religion which is the 'glue' and reflection of society. A religion which, through its imagery and language, proclaims a gendered, hierarchical ordering of reality strikes many as offensive, or minimally has lost its relevance. Allowing it to disempower us no longer, we prefer a secular world in which we can flourish. Hence the statement of one like Mary Daly that on becoming a feminist the first thing she did was to throw out the male God.



Edwina Sandys' 'Christa' statue depicting Jesus Christ as a woman



Ntozake Shange



Is God a Woman?

It is scarcely to be wondered at that in recent years women have wanted to reclaim their power, seeing themselves in God's image. But what are the problems? In 1984, famously, Edwina Sandys' 'Christa', a sculpture of a woman crucified, was placed in the cathedral of St John the Divine in New York. This was declared by the bishop, Walter Dennis, to be 'theologically and historically indefensible'. In terms of history, this cuts across the gender divide in that Jesus was male; but to say it is 'theologically' indefensible speaks worlds. Classically it has been said that women stand in relation to Jesus as the Christ as do men, for God in Christ took on humanity (it is not that Christians proclaim a male human being to be 'a little god'). Condemned the Christa may have been, but it remains the case that many women, particularly those who have been abused by men, have the greatest difficulty with the idea of a male God, or Christ. Significantly Sandys said of her sculpture that she wanted 'to portray the suffering of women'. Black women are faced with overcoming the double bind of disempowerment on account of both race and sex. In Ntozake Shange's choro-poem 'For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuf' (performed on the stage in New York in 1976 and elsewhere), a Black woman, taking centre stage, declares: 'I was missing something, something so important, something promised, a laying on of hands'. She craves healing. And she concludes in well-known words: 'I found God in myself and I loved her, I loved her fiercely.'

Given the sexist nature of the Abrahamic religions some women have moved outside. In a powerful essay published in 1978 'Why Women Need the Goddess' Carol P. Christ argued that, just as men have come into their own in their relation to their God, so too women need the construct of a Goddess in relation to whom they can pit themselves and in whose image see themselves. It is notable however that Carol P. Christ doesn't want to re-create the male God in female form, God in a skirt as had been said.

Rather is the concept of 'Goddess' deliberately left fluid. Carol P. Christ is interested in the Goddess in the ancient world; for today she wants a Goddess who can be seen as over-against us as well as abiding within us. Better known perhaps is the revelatory passage in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* in which - again a Black woman, Celie - announces that she is going to 'chase that old white man out of her head'; the image, which as she discovers, she has always held of God. Henceforth she will see God in the wonder of the world of nature and also as within her.

We should distinguish all such moves from the age-old attempt to give the 'male' God a 'female' face. The God who is Lord and Father has frequently been depicted as having what men designate 'feminine' qualities: he is 'merciful', has 'everlasting arms', and comforts his people. God becomes a 'motherly Father'. The Middle Ages took this a step further in referring to Christ as 'mother', symbolically giving him breasts which succoured the disciple, his 'milk' being compared to the wine of the eucharist. But a 'male' God who has now accrued female characteristics scarcely helps the situation of women. While the male God now has it all, women are left standing. In the world in which eminent male theologians (Augustine or Anselm) lauded Christ as "mother", the lot of actual women was often horrific. The tradition simply lacks a symbolic image of man and woman present, the one to the other, as equal adults. Images of Adam and Eve before the Fall are the closest we come. But they depict woman as temptress as she offers him the fruit, a "sin" for which her punishment was to be subordinate to him. Or else Eve is shown as formed from Adam.

Ariana's song takes us no further; indeed it is highly problematic. She is not saying that women should see God in their image or find God within. She proclaims that, experiencing sexual intercourse, men should conclude that 'God is a Woman'! This is something very different. It astonishes me that, when women have — since ever — been associated by men with sexuality and held to be 'temptress', woman should now advertise her availability through

this wording and imagery. Is this really what we want young women scarcely into their teens among whom Ariana has such a following to be imbibing? Young women in particular, having lost all sense of their dignity and worth, can come to despise their bodies, succumbing to self-harm or anorexia. A situation is created which is the precise opposite of what women so desperately need, namely to attain to a sense of their self-integrity. What is so problematic with Ariana's song is surely the lack of respect for persons which it conveys. Woman does not exist for man. Rather each person deserves respect, within an inter-relational dynamic.

The Concept of 'God'

How then should we think of 'God'? What does 'God' have to do with these considerations? It will be clear that the God we have inherited can be of little help. Throughout generations such a concept of God has been used to foster and consolidate hierarchical, gender relationships. 'He' has been toxic for women, and ultimately has not aided men in coming into their own. Yet 'He' still holds sway. The problem is that God has been conceptualised in terms of a world picture which we no longer hold, so that God is up there and out there, 'male' on a grand scale.

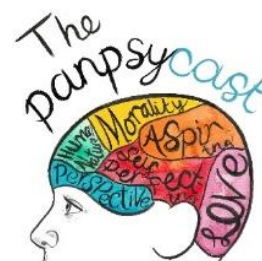
Peculiarly appropriate I think is the naming of God as spirit. For spirit is within each of us and in a dynamic sense passes between us. I note that in Greek, Hebrew and also Arabic the word for spirit (Greek *pneuma*, Hebrew *ruach*, Arabic *ruh*) also connotes breath, which gives us life. It is surely with this kind of language that we can play as we seek to speak of God.

You know the old joke: 'What is the difference between a philosopher and a theologian?' Answer: "A philosopher is a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat; whereas the theologian thinks he's found the cat." Too much theology has consisted in looking for 'cats' (which improbably exist). God is scarcely an object set over against us, which does or doesn't 'exist'. Rather God is that in which we live and move and have our being, allowing us most fully to be ourselves. It is in recognition of this that we shall be healed. Furthermore, it is in placing others in their true context, which is God, that we shall neither be tempted to exploit nor deify them.

TAKE IT FURTHER

There is no requirement to do the following tasks, however if you want to better prepare yourself and your depth of knowledge and understanding, you may wish to do the following:

Listen to the Pansycast Philosophy Podcast, available on all podcast platforms



Access the full PDF book of ***Ethics for A-level*** by Mark Dimmock and Andrew Fisher for free here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345128538_Ethics_for_A-Level.

1. Read the section '1. An Introduction to Kantian Ethics' on pages 31-32 to get to grips with **ethics according to Kant** before you learn about him on the course. You may wish to take notes of the key points to help solidify your understanding
2. Read the sections '3. Natural Law Theory' and '4. Summary of Aquinas' Natural Law Theory' on pages 66-70 to get to grips with **ethics according to Aquinas** before you learn about him on the course. You may wish to take notes of the key points to help solidify your understanding

Watch episode 1 of Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch's documentary series, ***A History of Christianity***, which can be found on **YouTube** here: [History of Christianity \(Documentary Episode 1\) - YouTube](#). Make a note of some of the key points within the development of the Christian Church (for example, the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century). This will give you a grounding knowledge of why there is a diversity of viewpoints in relation to beliefs, teachings and ethical issues.

If you have access to streaming platforms such as **Netflix/Disney+** you could watch the following and consider what the key messages or ideas behind each are:

1. **The Good Place** (Netflix)
2. **The Story of God with Morgan Freeman: Why does evil exist?** (Disney+)