THE SEARCH FOR MEANING AND VALUES

The Search for meaning and Values – takes place in 4 parts:
*i) Why people search for meaning and values in life!
*ii) Responses to the Quest for meaning and values → Philosophy.
*iii) Belief in God as a central response to this quest for some groups!
*iv) Way religions respond to questions about the meaning of life!
"Give me a **why** to live and I will endure almost any **how.**"

Viktor E. Frankl, "Man's Search for Meaning"

Victor Frankl did a lot of study on this concept of meaning and values. The above quote could be discussed in relevance to any of the inspirational characters who survived the Holocaust.

**1.1 The contemporary context**

- give two examples from contemporary culture that illustrate the human search for meaning. Examples may be taken from music, art, literature, or youth culture.

**MUSIC:**

*"There’s gotta be more to life"* Stacie Orico

I've got it all, but I feel so deprived  
I go up, I come down and I'm emptier inside  
Tell me what is this thing that I feel like  
I'm missing  
And why can't I let it go

**CHORUS:**

There's gotta be more to life...  
I'm always waiting on something other than this  
Cause the more that I'm...  
Trippin' out thinkin' there must be more to life  
Well it's life, but I'm sure... There's gotta be more  
(Than wanting more)

I've got the time and I'm wasting it slowly  
Here in this moment I'm half-way out the door  
Onto the next thing, I'm searching for something that's missing  
CHORUS  
I'm wanting more

CHORUS - repeat twice

More to life  
There's gotta be more to life (more to life)  
There's gotta be more to life (more)  
More to my life

The song suggests that there must be more to life. Often people are searching for meaning or some point to their existence. Often these questions can arise out of questioning what will make me happy? Or what is my purpose? Often people are looking for something if they become disillusioned with the materialistic side of life or have an empty feeling and looking for what will complete them/make them happy. The title of the song suggests that everyone wants something more → to be happy and contented. The video complements the theme of the song – showing the singer Stacie Orico in various guises be it Mother in an abusive relationship, waitress being abused by a customer, career woman, thief or herself at a photo shoot. All these caricatures sing the lyrics showing that people in all walks of life can search for something more. The search for meaning and values is a Universal phenomenon.
**Literature:**

*The Road Not Taken Robert Frost (1874–1963).*

TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black. 
Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.

This poem from Robert Frost has a lot to say about the search for meaning and values. Frost claims that he wrote this poem about his friend Edward Thomas, with whom he had walked many times in the woods near London. Frost has said that while walking they would come to different paths and after choosing one, Thomas would always fret wondering what they might have missed by not taking the other path.

The poem is an allegory – on one level it is simply about walking in the woods however on another it is about the decisions we make and how each choice has big implications for the path of our whole life. We may often wonder if we made different choices in our youth would our lives be different. We may even plan and going back some day but as Frost says “way leads on to way” It is very difficult to undo past choices. The final line could be seen in either a positive or negative light.

The other word that leads non-discerning readers astray is the word “sigh.” By taking “difference” to mean a positive difference, they think that the sigh is one of nostalgic relief; however, a sigh can also mean regret. There is the “oh, dear” kind of sigh, but also the “what a relief” kind of sigh. Which one is it? We do not know. If it is the relief sigh, then the difference means the speaker is glad he took the road he did; if it is the regret sigh, then the difference would not be good, and the speaker would be sighing in regret. But the plain fact is we do not know what that sigh is. Again, the speaker of the poem does not even know the nature of that sigh, because that sigh and his evaluation of the difference his choice will make are still in the future. It is a truism that any choice we make is going to make “all the difference” in how our future turns out.
provide two examples of each of the following key questions that emerge in contemporary culture: the goal and purpose of life; the meaning of good and evil; the experience of suffering

God and the problem of evil!

Jews, Christians and Muslims believe that God is:

* benevolent – i.e. utterly good and kind.
* omniscient – i.e. all-knowing.
* omnipotent – i.e. all-powerful.

However, some people wonder if this is really so?? Many experiences in life make people question - How could an all knowing, all powerful, utterly good God allow so much evil and suffering in the world. Examples of this evil and suffering occurs under two headings:

Moral evil: This refers to actions committed by the human person that deliberately seeks to inflict suffering on another e.g. murder.

Non-moral evil: This refers to any naturally occurring event that is beyond our human power to control or prevent, which inflicts harm on a person or thing e.g. an earthquake.

Response:

Moral evil: Many thinkers make a connection between free will and the existence of evil in the world. As we are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis) we have been given a gift of free will. Only human beings can choose to do good or evil. God wants us to use the gift wisely but does not force us to. If we only did good we would be puppets. We are offered guidance (the bible etc) but never forced; evil therefore is a result of human weakness.

Non-moral evil: Natural disasters although terrible are an essential in keeping the earth balanced, e.g. earthquakes as a result of the molten earths crust and plates shifting. They are essential to sustain all human life. However it is true that many further atrocities could be avoided and much suffering caused by natural disasters is actually attributed to people’s choices i.e. moral evil. Examples of this would include… *Those in danger receiving advanced warning.
*Governments using resources wisely to relocate people in danger areas.
*Aid being given … a good example of this was the recent plight of those in New Orleans.
• identify cultural factors in contemporary society that can block the search for meaning

Consider the larger question of who we are as human beings as a context for this. Love, truth, goodness, beauty provide parameters for understanding human nature. Humans are social beings; happiness is not achieved outside of a community or in the absence of friends. Themes of individuality, freedom, creativity. Emergence of an instrumentalist culture gives rise to view that success (measured in material / monetary terms) is key to happiness. Secularisation of culture – little room for a relational, spiritual or ethical dimension to happiness. Materialism, Consumerism, Technological mastery, Utilitarianism, Capitalism.

Radicalisation of individualism & instrumentalism without the counterbalance of tradition or the community. Less contact with family/community – growth of individualism.

NO. 1 → Ideology of secularism:

Some people are indifferent to religion but not to secular values such as honesty, truthfulness, social justice. Repudiating any reference to the sacred as a result of a belief in the self-sufficiency of science & technology or as a result of the perceived ineffectiveness of religion when faced with social, economic and political evils, this form of indifference reflects the view that religion is literally irrelevant to life. This secularist opinion is accentuated in an increasingly individualistic environment that seeks to privatise religious beliefs and that has lost any sense of the importance of the social role of the Church as a builder or sustainer of community values.

Secularism is a philosophy of life that limits itself to the present here and now. It is rooted in the rise of secular humanism in the Renaissance and is strengthened by the development of scientific thought. Secularism denies the influence of religion and teaches that there is no other worldly or transcendent source of meaning. We can only find meaning in the present world. Secular Humanist believe there is no higher power than the human person, and that any moral guidance of how to live and treat each other comes from the human person, yet they do promote values such as honesty, justice etc.

NO. 2 → Radical individualism denies the horizon of meaning that is framed by one’s membership of a community (family, society, religious community)
gave two examples of the contemporary phenomenon of indifference to
the search for meaning.

NO. 1 → “APATHY”
Some are indifferent to all beliefs and values. This expression of
indifference can be a mask that hides anger and/or a deeply pessimistic
attitude to life – an experience of emptiness or the failure to find any
meaning in life.
It may have its origins in the experience of illness, loneliness,
unemployment or the experience of rejection in a relationship.
Expressed in phrases such as ‘so what’ or ‘it does not matter’, it
proclaims not just that there is nothing to believe in, but no one to
believe. This form of indifference could reflect the sense of rootlessness
in a culture that is increasingly marked by the loss of essential social /
community contexts within which lives can and must be anchored.

Extended family v nuclear family – In the past, our social network has
been made up of an extended group: parents, children, grand-parents,
aunties, uncles & cousins. However in modern society people are more
likely to be in a nuclear family social grouping i.e. parents and 1.2
children. This leads to great isolation and loneliness where we may live
on a street but know nothing of our neighbours beside the occasional
“Hello.” This isolation can lead to apathy regarding the deeper
questions surrounding social wellbeing … ‘If it doesn’t effect me
directly, then I don’t care’

Loss of anchor points, both horizontal and vertical. Affiliation to a world
religion can’t be sustained in the absence of the horizontal bonds that link
us to significant others such as family, neighbours, friends, community &
society and the vertical bonds that link us to the Good or God. Increased
evidence of growing influence of instrumental reasoning – consumerist
reasoning promoting the logic of the marketplace, where everyone and
everything has a price and a shelf life. Pragmatic concerns override
foundational issues of meaning and value and marginalises the values found
in virtue ethics. Religions are viewed in this ethos in a similar way as other
supermarket goods. Little room for the ideal of an unconditional
commitment to the person of Christ or anybody else.

1.2 The tradition of search
• give a brief definition and explanation of the nature and purpose of philosophy in terms of the search for meaning and values

What is Philosophy?
1. examination of basic concepts: the branch of knowledge or academic study devoted to the systematic examination of basic concepts such as truth, existence, reality, causality, and freedom
2. school of thought: a particular system of thought or doctrine
3. guiding or underlying principles: a set of basic principles or concepts underlying a particular sphere of knowledge
4. set of beliefs or aims: a precept, or set of precepts, beliefs, principles, or aims, underlying somebody's practice or conduct
5. calm resignation: restraint, resignation, or calmness and rationality in somebody's behavior or response to events

What is its purpose?
In the world of thought, there are countless ways to look at problems, beliefs, perceptions, ways of living, etc. Emphasize the fact that in the coming unit, you will learn about various philosophers and different ways of thinking about life and the world around us.

The Nature and Purpose of philosophy

1. **THE QUEST FOR MEANING**
Unlike other species human beings possess an innate sense of wonder and are keen to understand the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of our experience. The nature and purpose of philosophy reflects on this human reality and explores what is unique to the human species: the search for wisdom. Philosophy may be described as the record of the human search for wisdom. The foundational questions of meaning and value are re-shaped by every successive generation.

At the heart of philosophy is a love of wisdom, a sense of wonder, a desire to know the mysteries of the universe. Philosophy holds that it is possible to reach this goal with the unaided use of reason. Philosophy originated in Miletus in Greece around 585 BCE. This time saw a gradual move away from the use of myth in favour of reason and logic. Philosophers began to argue that reality was coherent, intelligible and accessible to reason. The ancient belief in a universe that was lawless, irrational and random was abandoned in favour of a belief in a universe governed by laws. This paradigm shift in thinking represents a monumental breakthrough in philosophical thought. It paved the way for the rise of science with its emphasis on the intelligibility of the universe.

Unlike arguments within nihilism, science claims that the universe if ordered. Unlike arguments from scepticism, science claims that human reason can access the laws of the universe and that the complex laws governing the universe can be accessed through scientific experimentation. If the universe is, as science suggests, ordered and intelligible to human reason then philosophy will explore the dialogue around the acceptance or rejection of nihilism and scepticism. Philosophy must ask if indeed the universe is intelligible and law-governed and whether or not the human mind can understand these laws. The branch of philosophy called ‘metaphysics’ is about studying the very possibility of science.
‘The role of philosophy’ is to inquire into the nature of the universe, to seek to uncover the laws that govern the world and to seek answers to the foundational questions that define human existence’ (Cassidy, pp 53-54).

Philosophy may be classified under the following 6 headings:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphysics</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Anthropology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Metaphysics inquires into the nature of Being or that which exists</td>
<td>Epistemology is the study of knowledge, asking questions such as how we know, and what are the limits of our knowledge.</td>
<td>Anthropology explores foundational questions such as ‘what is a person?’, ‘are humans free?’, ‘is there such a thing as human nature?’</td>
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<th>Ethics</th>
<th>Political philosophy</th>
<th>Logic</th>
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<td>Ethics examines the nature of good and evil and what it means to be an ethical person, asking questions such as ‘is there such a thing as the good life?’, and if so, ‘what is it?’ and ‘how can we know it?’</td>
<td>Political philosophy explores the social character of human living and looks at the nature and purpose of a political community.</td>
<td>Logic explores the structure of rationality and seeks to uncover the basis upon which rational discourse is possible.</td>
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- in the case of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle present a summary of two of their main ideas and explain why each idea was important in the development of philosophy
SCARATES: the thinking of Socrates on the moral good, the purpose of life and the importance of essences!

BIOGRAPHY

469-399 B.C.

“The only thing I know is that I know nothing.”

A central figure in Athenian city life, Socrates was one of the foremost thinkers of his time and made a profound impact on ancient Western philosophy. Socrates enjoyed spending his days in Athenian marketplaces discussing any topic imaginable with anyone who cared to join him. Always barefoot, poorly dressed and of simple means, Socrates refused to receive money for teaching. Instead, he saw himself as a “horsefly” responsible for stinging life into Athens.

Socrates wrote nothing. What we do know about him comes from the writings of his students, Plato and Xenophon. He did possess a magnetic personality, however, and drew a large following of young men to his circle. They especially enjoyed watching Socrates challenge their Greek elders in the intellectual sparring matches that earned him many powerful enemies. Socrates argued with people. He took apart what they thought they knew and revealed their ignorance. Known today as the Socratic Method, this approach to argumentation starts with simple questions that lead the opponent to think he is wiser than the questioner. In the end, these simple questions become more and more challenging and the opponent’s answers are used to prove he is wrong. For Socrates “Ignorance is the only evil.”

He was passionately committed to leading a good life and believed happiness emerged from it. Knowing the difference between what is good and what is bad was the central question.

In 399 B.C. Socrates was arrested and charged with worshiping false gods and corrupting young minds. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. Instead of pleading for his life, as his accusers had hoped for, Socrates suggested that the city of Athens should offer him one meal a day and a statue of him in the marketplace. The court ruled against his proud statement and ordered the death sentence be carried out. His friends pleaded with Socrates to flee, but he remained devoted to Athens and its orders, even if they resulted in his death. As his friends watched, Socrates drank the poisonous Hemlock that brought his death.

Key ideas: Ethics and the Purpose of Life— we must live well, honourably and rightly; the purpose of life is to live well; rhetoric v objective truth and justice and discernment through human reasoning; use of power; virtue and happiness; order is good; living by the dictates of human reason, temperance, moderation.
PLATO:

Key ideas: Reality v Illusion, Being and becoming, change and permanence, One and Many, intelligibility of the universe; what is worthwhile is eternal, objective, immutable; theory of ideas / forms; the Good, love as desire for goodness & beauty; immortality; virtue & beauty of the soul; objective standards of justice.

His contribution to philosophy: Plato is remembered as one of history’s greatest philosophers. He founded the Academy as a school of philosophy, and it earned an unrivalled reputation in classical culture. He also employed the dialogical method to explain his views. His entire thirty six dialogues remain in tact today. Socrates, the teacher and mentor of Plato, had a profound influence on him. In fact many of Plato’s dialogues are written as a record of the ethical ideals for which Socrates lived and died. We see the influence of Socrates on Plato in particular in the ‘Republic’ where Plato argues that ‘the health of the state is crucially dependent on its being governed by those who love wisdom; those whose lives are lived in the light of the Good rather than by those whose lives are blinded by their own illusions.

Main teachings: This distinction between reality and illusion is clearly illustrated in book seven of the Republic. Here Plato introduces the allegory of the cave (Republic, 514a – 519c). The context for the allegory is the task of education, highlighting the challenge that awaits all those who seek to model their lives in the light of the Good. The allegory describes a cave inhabited by prisoners. For as long as they can remember they have been in chains facing a wall, their backs turned to the cave entrance. A fire burns behind them and a screen separates them from the fire. On the screen is cast the shadows of puppet-like figures. The light of the fire casts these shadows onto the wall. To the prisoners these shadows are real. To them, truth is the shadows of the figures since this is the only reality of which they are aware. What if one prisoner is released from the chains and turns towards the fire? At first he will be distressed by the glare of the fire light and also perplexed, since he will think that the shadows are more real than the objects he now sees. If he is dragged up to the cave entrance he will become agitated since he will have to grow accustomed to the sunlight. But gradually he will begin to see the real world and realise that the world in the cave is a world consisting of shadows. Then, since he pities his former friends, he will return to the cave to enlighten them. He will not be welcomed back. Instead he will meet with hostility and threats since their world view is now under threat. In fact, any attempt to free them would most likely result in their violent outburst and the freed prisoner is as risk of immediate death.

The Republic
This was an attempt by Plato to understand the tragedy of Socrates. Republic is not the best translation of the book. It means something nearer to “affairs of the State” meaning the polis or city states of Greece.

It is about how to govern a city state and came to the conclusion that a timarchy (rule by property owners or the honourable) as was practised in Sparta was the best available way. Democracy was not considered by Plato to be the best form of Government. It was democracy that executed the man he admires most Socrates.
• He puts forward the idea that the best rule is by philosopher kings, men specially trained from birth in the art of government.
• The allegory of “The Cave” is found in The Republic. In this Plato believes that seeing is not enough; one must have knowledge as well in order to interpret what one sees.

The writings of Plato remind us of the manner in which the goal and purpose of life, the search for meaning and value is shaped by the universal love of beauty, truth, goodness and love. These concepts are not just figments of my imagination or subjective creations; beauty is not simply in the eye of the beholder, nor can the good life be determined simply by that which I feel is good. Beauty, Truth, Goodness, and Love really exist, and are immortal. Plato theory of Ideas is an expression of his conviction in the objectivity of concepts such as truth, goodness, justice, etc.

Plato’s theory of ideas is based on a hunch that what is worthwhile, valuable and real must be
(a) something which is eternal rather than finite,
(b) something that is objective not subjective – whose existence or value does not depend on me,
(c) something which is immutable not transient,

• The distinction between the real world and an illusory one that is shaped by public opinion – the distinction between truth and opinion, reality and shadows / illusions.
For Plato, the sun symbolises the Good, and it is only a life lived in this light that is capable of either seeing reality or living in the real world. The allegory of the cave charts the journey that must be taken by all who strive to live a good life. This journey involves a personal conversion – a radical reshaping of one’s vision that will demand the shedding of images of fulfillment shaped by the desires for pleasure or power.

• The image of sight / blindness reflects the manner in which prejudice is a form of blindness. To see the real world – to see and to love truth is a moral achievement. All too many people are content to live in the illusory world that is shaped by their own prejudices.

• The reference to the death of the person who returned to the cave to free the prisoners is meant to remind readers of the death of Socrates. It is a reminder that all those who love wisdom have a responsibility to contribute to the education of society and reflects the stubbornness of all who are captive to their own illusions.
The allegory of the cave points to the challenge that awaits all those who seek to model their lives in the light of the Good. It begins with a description of a cave that is inhabited by prisoners. From their earliest childhood they have been in chains facing a wall with their backs to the entrance. Behind them is a fire and between them and the fire is a screen that displays puppet-like figures. All that those in chains can see are the shadows of these puppet-like figures that the light of the fire throws on to the back wall. To them, the shadows are real; for them, truth is the shadows of the images – the only reality of which they are aware. What happens if one of these prisoners is released from his chains and forced to turn towards the fire? He will be both distressed by the glare of the light and perplexed because he will think that the shadows that he formerly saw are more real than the objects that are now shown to him. Suppose once more that he is dragged up until he reaches the entrance to the cave. He is likely to be irritated – his eyes dazzled he will require to grow accustomed to the light of the world in the cave for what it is i.e., a world of made up of shadows. Finally, out of pity for his former friends, he will return to the cave to enlighten them. However, they will not welcome his visit and he will be received with hostility as someone who threatens their world-view. Furthermore, any
attempt to release them and to lead them up to the light will likely meet with violent opposition that could end with his death.

Give students time to complete the assignments and take feedback from the students written assignments.

- Underground cave, humans been here since childhood, chains so they can’t look around … behind them a fire is blazing, they can only see shadows!
- Other men travel between fire and the chained men … they carry objects … the fire casts shadows of these objects onto the wall in front of the chained men.
- The chained men can hear echo’s of the passing men … they would presume these noises came from the shapes on the wall.
- Going up the field of knowledge which represents learning about the forms.
- Bleeding represents the struggle of the path towards true knowledge.
- Brightness/hurt eyes - representing the gradual way we come to knowledge … at first he will only be able to judge everything in terms of the shadows he is accustomed to.
- the sun representing the form of the good - what they were seeing in the cave were fake … seeing the duck outside the cave represents the true forms!
- Ignorance is bliss! … for normal people but not for philosophers!

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ARISTOTLE:
I was born in 384BCE the son of a physician of the Macedonian king. I studied as a pupil of the Academy in Athens. I remained there for many years as a pupil and teacher. I was a devoted pupil and friend of the founder of the Academy. After his death I left Athens to work as tutor to Alexander the Great. Returning to Athens in 33 BC I taught philosophy and later founded my own school of philosophy. I wrote on an extraordinary diverse range of subjects, much of which has not survived intact. I also worked in the natural sciences particularly zoology and biology. People say I laid the foundations or the biological sciences. I died in 322BCE.
I lived in Athens in the second half of the fifth century BCE (470 -399BCE) I was an promoter of the art of illogical reasoning and taught it to a famous student. I left no written record of my philosophy and people

Who am I?

matter and form
The thinking of Aristotle on matter and form: For the first 20 years he accepted Plato’s thinking. However, he became critical of the theory of forms. He felt that Plato was finding it hard to explain one world so he created another. For Aristotle all sensible realities have 2 principles →

- Matter
- Form

Aristotle, Plato’s student, disagreed with his argument that it is the universals or the forms/ideas (immaterial / universal) that really exist. For Aristotle it is the individual substance that really exists. The universal is an abstraction that has no separate existence. For Aristotle, every being (substance) is composed of ‘matter and form’ – prime matter and substantial form. The matter is what makes me unique whereas the form tells me the species to which I belong. Just as in biological terms we only understand an acorn if we grasp its potentiality to become a fully developed oak tree, so too, in terms of the meaning and value of an individual human life, Aristotle urged people to look beyond the immediate horizon and to think instead of the human form - the potentiality of human nature. Aristotle insisted that to understand something’s essence is to grasp its potentiality. Aristotle was convinced that the question of meaning is ultimately linked to questions about the goal or purpose of life. He recognizes that the realization that every living organism exists for a purpose is a powerful argument in favour of an ordered universe and the existence of an intelligent being who is the cause of this order. In common with Plato, Aristotle maintains that
there is a right, rational and natural order to the quest for individual and social self-realization, an order that finds its articulation in an analysis of the substantial form, i.e., human nature.

**His contribution to scientific thought!**
Aristotle was a key figure in developing empirical thinking. He founded his own academy. He felt that anyone who is ignorant of Maths should not enter Philosophic culture. He held the stars, universe, moon and sun as spheres with the earth in the centre. He carried out anatomy of animals and birds. He had a huge impact on scientific thought for a number of reasons:
- His scientific exactness was new to Greece.
- Founder of logic

Aristotle is universally recognized for his contribution to scientific thought and principles. Science of every kind is dedicated to explaining the reason for experiences through the process of uncovering the existence of a cause or causes of these experiences. If the intelligibility of the universe is to be affirmed, Aristotle was convinced that one had to make sense of the experience of movement, change or becoming. In his theory of ‘Potency and Act’ Aristotle observed one is only able to explain the possibility of movement if it is acknowledged that every sensible substance is composed of both act and potency, the act reflecting the being as it is; the potency reflecting the being as it could become (its potential). The only being that has no potency is the one who is the first cause of all movement – the unmoved mover. Aristotle identified the unmoved mover with the Good who is the object of desire and thought. This shifts the direction of thought from a focus on the cause as in the origins of movement to one that reflects on the cause as in the purpose or goal of movement. As he say’s: “The final cause, then, moves by being loved, while all other things that move do so by being moved.” Not only did Aristotle provide the first systematic analysis of the nature of causation but he also recognized that the intelligibility of the universe and thus the possibility of physics, depended on the acknowledgement of a first cause, which he named God.
The Sophists

The growing demand for education in 5th century BCE Greece brought about a group of philosophy teachers known as sophists. They were a professional class rather than a school. The demand was partly for genuine knowledge, but mainly for the skills that would allow the students to gain political power. The Sophists travelled Greece teaching those who could afford to pay for their services. The sophists were not, technically speaking, philosophers, but, instead taught any subject for which there was a popular demand. Topics included rhetoric, politics, grammar, etymology, history, physics, and mathematics. Early on they were seen as teachers of virtue in the sense that they taught people to perform their function in the state. Protagoras of Abdera, who appeared about 445 BCE, is named as the first Sophist; after him the most important is Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos and Hipppias of Elis. Wherever they appeared, especially in Athens, they were received with enthusiasm and many flocked to hear them. Even such people as Pericles, Euripides, and Socrates sought their company.

The most popular career of a Greek of ability at the time was politics; hence the sophists largely concentrated on teaching rhetoric (public speaking). The aims of the young politicians whom they trained were to persuade the multitude of whatever they wished them to believe. The search for truth was not their most important goal. Sophists provided a bank of arguments on any subject for any particular situation, either for or against. They boasted of their ability to make the worse appear the better reason, to prove that black is white. Gorgias argued that one did not need to know a subject in order to be able to argue about it. This led to debate becoming little more than point scoring and becoming involved in the minor points of the argument. Their arguments were not so much about the content of the argument but rather about how the point was argued. They used epigrams paradoxes and clever use of words and phrases. The word "sophistry": has now come to mean using false arguments knowing them to be false. The later philosophers were not happy with this form of philosophy. Plato said that there was prejudice against the name Sophist. And Aristotle defined Sophist as those who argue and reason falsely for the sake of gain.

From beginning of the second century CE, the name "sophist" attained a new distinction, the name was given to the professional orators, who appeared in public with great pomp and delivered declamations either prepared beforehand or improvised on the spot. Like the earlier sophists, they went generally from place to place, and were acclaimed by their contemporaries, including the Roman Emperors. They also attempted to defend Paganism.

Protogoras held that “Man is the measure of all things” which led to the belief in relativism. The Sophists did develop the art and skills of debating. They also created disagreement in Athens over the question of absolute norms for right and wrong. Because the differences between right and wrong were no longer clearly delineated this caused trouble in the civil society of Athens.
The Sophists – Who were they???
Why did they arrive into Greek society???

The Greeks were experiencing great political success at the time and as a result artistic endeavour and democracy flourished. The Sophists were a group of travelling teachers who were highered by the rich to educate their young in politics, rhetoric, persuasion etc. So they could percate jobs in Law, politics and medicine. 

\[ \text{MONEY} \rightarrow \text{EDUCATION} \rightarrow \text{LEADERSHIP.} \]

Outline below some of the teachings and practices of the sophists that you feel Plato and Socrates would find issue with based on their beliefs and explain why:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching/practice of the sophists:</th>
<th>Socrates &amp; Plato’s belief and why they would conflict with those of the sophists.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Sophists were not concerned with questions of the natural world, such as how the earth began; they were more concerned with the person and the persons place in the world.</td>
<td>Socrates was concerned with bigger questions of existence as well as the spiritual world ... material wealth and ignorance for him were evils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protagoras</strong> a famous sophist said “man is the measure of all things.” He came to the conclusion that it was not possible to know absolute truth. That truth is a matter for the individual and that two people ideas of truth may differ but both are valid.</td>
<td>For Socrates and Plato ... Philosophers were right and all others were wrong. Plato even went so far as to say only philosophers should run the state. For Socrates and Plato it was possible to know absolute truth, there was one absolute form of truth from which all truth stems. For Socrates Wisdom was true goodness and ignorance the one true evil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thrasymachus</strong> a sophist stated that there was no such thing as right and wrong but merely the opinion of the majority or society at the time. He said: ‘justice is simply the interest of the stronger’</td>
<td>Socrates felt that there needed to be a universal form of justice for all people and it was better to suffer for the sake of right than to inflict injustice oneself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sophists appealed to the politically ambitious younger generation teaching the skill of <strong>rhetoric</strong>.</td>
<td>Socrates felt that rhetoric was a false art that appealed to vanity ... it was like a doctor being tried by a sweet seller before a jury of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The philosophy of the sophists created bitter disagreements in Athens as they suggested there were no norms for what was good and evil, right and wrong. They contributed to the breakdown in moral order.</td>
<td>Socrates felt society needed rules and punishment for the good of the whole ... this is why he willingly took the hemlock punishment he received as he felt one could not go against the laws of the state for the good of the whole of society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on the question of the search for meaning: identify and briefly explain three key moments in the development of philosophical thought from the classical to the contemporary period.

(For Classical Philosophers like Socrates and Plato the search for meaning and happiness was to be found in knowledge, truth and education.)

**Time line**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian Philosophers</th>
<th>The Age of Reason / Enlightenment</th>
<th>Romanticism &amp; Existentialism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Augustine (5th Century)</td>
<td>Descartes (17th Century)</td>
<td>Nietzsche (19th Century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquinas (13th Century)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outline where the search for meaning stemmed from for each of the above found ...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEARCH FOR MEANING AND HAPPINESS IS FOUND IN GOD AND RELIGION.</th>
<th>SEARCH FOR MEANING AND HAPPINESS FOUND THROUGH SCIENTIFIC FACTS AND BEING RATIONAL.</th>
<th>SEARCH FOR MEANING COMES FROM CREATIVITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**St. Augustine of Hippo**

Abandoned Manichaeism (determinist outlook: our futures are mapped out for us) in favour of free will – we can affect what happens to us.

The Confessions – we are on a journey searching for happiness – ‘our hearts are restless until they rest

**Age of Reason / Enlightenment**

17th & 18th Centuries: Changes in scientific knowledge, explorations and religious beliefs.

Tension: science v religion.

Copernicus, Galileo, Newton: theories challenged Church’s

**Romanticism & Existentialism**

18th & 19th Centuries new celebration of human passion in art, literature etc – reaction to enlightenment era. Creativity & individuality – emotions & rationality both integrated & valued.

Existentialists like Kierkegaard said formation of human
Human desire is to love & be loved. God is the Source of love. God seeks us out in love. We are loved & then show this love to others, even enemies.

Despair & pride can prevent the search for meaning.

Truth is a gift from God. Importance of friendship.

**Thomas Aquinas**  
*Summa Theologica.*  
Goal / reason for an action determines if it is good / bad. Ultimate goal for humans is God.  
Rejected wealth, power, fame, pleasure as sources of happiness. Only God can satisfy the search for happiness. We become happy by living a virtuous life & seeking the good.  
Themes of happiness, friendship & love.

| | understanding of universe & Biblical interpretation.  
Galileo: sun stationary @ centre of universe; earth moves around it. Church condemned Galileo.  
Enlightenment: we are responsible for our destiny; don’t need God or Church to show us how to live. Ability to rationalise distinguishes us from other species.  
Influence of Plato.  
Identity was vitally important. These are marked by autonomy & free will. Difficult to become independent due to influence of society. |
|---|---|
| **René Descartes**  
*Question of human existence was of interest to him. Understood the person as an autonomous & rational being (not at the mercy of divine authority). Belief in God. Cogito ergo sum – I think, therefore I am. Began with doubt of knowledge from senses. Begin with the self. Intellect / reason more reliable & important than senses. Study of being & the universe, to self, to God. I / Self = turn to the subject.*** |
| **Friedrich Nietzsche**  
*Suffered poor health for most of his life. Decline in mental health. Scepticism – there is no absolute, moral or scientific truth. Concept of truth needed only to control people & function. No absolute good or evil. This offended Christians. He referred to ‘slave morality’ in Christianity. Behaviour should be judged in terms of its excellence. Those who achieve excellence / greatness / leadership = successful. The power of the will. ‘God is dead’. Faith is not credible.* |
Three Key Moments in the Development of Philosophy

Emergence of Christian Philosophers
The Christian Philosophers attempted apply Greek philosophy to Christian belief. Two of the most famous are Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas. (Augustine of Hippo.) Augustine was born in the North African town of Hippo (354 CE) and became Bishop of Hippo in 397. He remained as Bishop until his death in 430. In one of his most famous writings “The City of God” he outlines the theory of a Just War. This was a reaction to the Vandal invasion of the Roman Empire. He developed the theory in response to the opposing views of the Christian Church of pacifism and the Roman Empires belief that one should conquer enemies of the state. His other famous works was his “The Confession” which relates his conversion to Christianity. In it is an account of why he deserted Manichaeanism and fought a more spiritual life in Christianity. It was considered the model for Christian writing and influenced many other Christian writers including Thomas Aquinas.

Modernity
Modernity is identified as a movement in the 16th century whereby people began to change how they thought about the world. In this period one of the most influential philosophers was René Descartes. One of Descartes main aims was to give philosophy a firm footing. He was sure that man could know things with absolute certainty. Descartes wrote … there is contradiction in conceiving that what thinks does not at the same time thinks, exists. Hence the conclusion “I think, therefore I am”. Is the first and most certain of all that occurs to one who philosophises in an orderly way. This is known as the Cogito ergo sum and is example of the thinking of the time that man can have knowledge of the world by his own efforts.
**Phenomenology**

In the 20th century there was a move among philosophers to concern the subject with all of human life. There were several schools of thought that wished to examine life this way and the most important was Phenomenology. One of Heidegger’s concerns was that of being (Dasein: the kind of existence that self-conscious human beings uniquely possess, man knows that he knows). H believed that because we know we will someday die this shapes our thinking. This provokes the question for Heidegger “Why do we exist?” and from this follows his question “Why is there “something” rather than “nothing”?" Heidegger influenced Albert Camus who was one of the leading figures in the Existentialist movement. Any assessment of Heidegger is coloured by his support for National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s.

*Existentialism - the philosophy of the 20th century:*

*Human autonomy and free will were hallmarks of existentialism thinking.*

*The influence on the society on the person meant it was difficult to become.*

**NIETZSCHE**

Believed that there was no absolute moral or scientific truth. The concept of truth is only something society needs to control human behaviour.

Beginning of the 20th century was marked by WWI. This terrible event saw millions die, carnage and violence. The impact this had on the new generation was that it left many disillusioned and no longer caring for the values of the previous generation. They did not look to the Church for meaning but felt that the search should go no further than the person themselves. The spirit of the age was marked by discontent. The freedom to make one’s own choices and the dangers of making the wrong choice were central concerns of this philosophy. One such thinker who worried regarding this was Jean-Paul Sartre.

**Jean-Paul Sartre**

His world view ’man is condemned to be free’ i.e. the person is solely responsible for their own actions. Meaning is to be found within the person.
THE RESPONSE TO QUEST

2.1 The language of symbol

- explain why symbol emerged in the formulation of responses to the questions of life in each case, give an example of the power of symbolic language on
  - individuals
  - groups
  - societies.

It is our nature as human beings to ask ‘why’ and Q the world around us. We need a reason for everything, particularly life, death, suffering, happiness etc. Religion in response to these questions talks of a creator and ‘otherness’ - i.e. the existence of more than we can name. Religion calls this ‘otherness’ sacred.

In our struggle to understand the world we use symbols when words are not enough. The great questions of life usually deal with abstracts such as love, happiness etc. These are very difficult to put into words. Also sometimes profound experiences go beyond words or leave us speechless. (yes even you Samantha!) We respond to the great mysteries of life using symbolic language i.e. words, actions, gestures, objects etc.

A symbol generally has more than one meaning and can evoke strong emotions in people e.g. a wedding ring etc.

Secular symbols: flag, rose, ring, war memorial, tattoos, jewellery, logos / labels etc.

Religious symbols: Cross, crescent, menorah, prayer beads, mandala, incense, water etc.

Forms of symbolic language

Importance of symbol in the formulation of responses to the question of the meaning of life: In our struggle to answer the great Q’s of life we create symbols. We can often find it difficult to express emotions, hopes, fears through words alone.

The power of symbolic language & its impact on individuals, groups & societies: Symbols can have great power – they can make an individual, group or society as a whole have a very strong response. A song can have a very emotional response for a group that might associate that song with a loved one.

Love, birth, death, happiness, suffering – everything relating to the great questions of life involving meaning, is difficult to express. Humans need symbolic language to engage in & express this search.
Symbols name & participate in the otherness / abstract / sacred. Symbols can be objects, gestures / actions, words, music colour etc: examples (Liturgical colours etc) Symbols move us as they work at a deep instinctual level. Examples: 9/11 symbols. Ritual = ‘repeated, commonly recognised behaviour through which a community engages with the mysteries of life’ (Mc Carthy Dinneen & Goggin).

Symbols are vital at a time of death or tragedy. Symbols help us express grief and solidarity.

The 9-11 terrorist attacks literally left people lost for words as they tried to cope with the unfolding tragedy. Symbols became hugely important and could be variously interpreted by an individual, a group or society. The fire-fighters raising the American flag from the rubble would mean something entirely different to a relative of a victim, the terrorists who plotted the attack and Americans as a society.

2.2 The tradition of response

- outline three myths from ancient cultures which attempt to answer key questions.

“A myth is a story that may contain historical fact or may be entirely fictitious. Even when it is entirely fiction however a myth is never a falsehood. The reason is that a myth’s purpose is to report revelation- not history or scientific fact – in a way that listeners can understand…. Myths then are accepted, effective ways of expressing truth.”

- Myth is a type of symbolic story. There are 4 types of myth:
  - Cosmic Myths
  - Theistic Myths
  - Hero Myths
  - Place/Objects myths

The Epic of Gilgamesh – hero and object myth.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is an epic poem from Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq) and is among the earliest known works of literary writing. Gilgamesh attempts to learn the secret of eternal life by undertaking a long and perilous
journey to meet the immortal flood hero, Utnapishti. Ultimately the poignant words addressed to Gilgamesh in the midst of his quest foreshadow the end result: "You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping." Gilgamesh, however, was widely celebrated by posterity for his building achievements, and for bringing back long-lost cultic knowledge to Uruk as a result of his meeting with Utnapishti. The story is widely read in translation, and the protagonist, Gilgamesh, has become an icon of popular culture.

The barmaid said to him, to Gilgamesh:
Gilgamesh, where are you wandering to? You will not find the life you seek. When the gods made mankind, They set death aside of men, But they kept life in their own hands.
So, Gilgamesh, do you fill your belly, Be happy day and night, Take pleasure every day, Day and night dance and play- Wear clean clothes, Wash your head, bathe in water, Attend to the child who holds your hand, Let your wife be happy with you. This is what man’s lot is.

This is one of the earliest accounts of a struggle to find meaning in the face of death.
What does this story show about the author attitude to death?

The symbol of “ascent” is used in many civilizations to mark a breakthrough to a different level of existence. Death, for example, is about transcending the human state and passing to the beyond. Typically, the journey to some ‘higher sphere’ is depicted or understood as an upward journey, a trudge up a mountain path, a grappling.
➢ In religious texts this symbol of ascent appears frequently - Jacob’s ladder, Mohammad seeing a ladder rising from the temple, St. John of the Cross depicts mystical perfection as the ascent of Mount Carmel.

Fountain of Youth – It’s a really good, simple story that many people will have heard of. As with many other myths there are a number of versions. There are a number of elements to consider within the story, such as the symbols of water and fountains, the concept of youth and the voyage of discovery. It connects in well with symbolism in many cultures and religions as well as having huge significance today – who wants to get old! Can be connected in with issues in modern science – anti-aging products, cosmetic surgery, etc.

Go back to story of Gilgamesh we studied in class ... comment on the use of the snake, flood, sleep, over-all moral, trying to understand world from their point of view i.e. why are we mortal???
— provide evidence of religious behaviour in ancient societies from each of the following: rites of passage and initiation; rites of burial and sacrifice; sacred art and artefacts

Newgrange: Among the symbols uncovered at Newgrange are those of place and time, the symbols of partnership or marriage, the symbols of belonging to a cosmic oneness, and the symbol of passing through death to the heart of being. The notion of passage from one form of being to another seems to be a constant in world mythologies and religions. It gives expression to a complex set of experiences such as the passage from darkness to light, from the womb to the world, from life to death, to a new existence after death. In particular, myths associated with the symbol of passage are linked to a journey to the centre, where the centre is seen as paradise, the place where heaven and earth meet.

◆ Various rituals were devised to mark rites of passage or transition in people’s lives. Some of these rituals had religious connotations.

Newgrange is one the best examples in Europe of a type of tomb known as a passage grave. It was built in the Boyne Valley in Co. Meath about 5,000 years ago. It is a megalithic site because of the length of the passage and the size of the great cairn where the dead were buried. On the morning of the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year, the morning sunlight slowly creeps through the passage and lights up the inner burial chamber. Newgrange was constructed over 5,000 years ago (about 3,200 B.C.), making it older than Stonehenge in England and the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. Newgrange was built during the Neolithic or New Stone Age by a farming community that prospered on the rich lands of the Boyne Valley. It has been designated a world heritage site by UNESCO.
It raises many questions ... **Why did the farmers of the Boyne Valley build this monument to their dead?**  
**Why did they want to capture the sunlight on the darkest day of the year? Is death the end?**

Symbolically the farmers captured the sun and thus protected the fertility of the land and the growth of the crops. They also expressed their belief that dying might not be the end, and so in Newgrange, instead of darkness there was light, instead of **death**, there was life.

Ancient societies also celebrated the passage from childhood to adulthood. There was much symbolism and ritual associated with this. In the Ndembu tribe in Africa, the young boys were taken from their home by the older men and brought into the forest to be initiated into the adult world. Firstly the child in them has to die and so they are stripped of all their belongings and placed in huts, which symbolise both tombs and wombs. The hut acts as a tomb for the child to die in and as a womb for the adult to emerge from. The young boys are covered in clay and dirt and ashes to symbolise dying and they wear masks to conceal their old identity. During this transition time as well, the young boys are given the sacra or ‘ultimate mysteries’ from the older men which it believes actually transforms them. These sacra are the myths and stories about the tribe and their place in the cosmos.
• provide evidence of the sense of the sacred in contemporary culture
What evidence is there from this article of the sense of the sacred and spirituality in Europe 2003? Why do people think it important to have religious ceremonies at births, marriages and death? Recent statistics shows evidence of a marked reluctance on the part of secular Europe to ignore the sacred character of key events in life e.g. the very high percentage of adults who think it important to have religious ceremonies at births, marriages and death (European Values Study 1999).

• provide evidence of spirituality in contemporary culture
Modern culture: With scientific discoveries and technology … is there any wonder or mystery left? Things that were mysterious to our ancestors we now take for granted:
EXAMPLES???
e.g. the earth round, rotation, stars, seasons, reproduction. We can reduce everything down to neat facts and statistics.
How do people find/search for meaning in the modern world? We are most aware of this spiritual quest when we experience something that challenges us to transform ourselves in some way. Examples of such experiences???
*reaching a certain age *death *birth of a child *war *tremendous beauty *overcoming an obstacle.
In all these respects we are the same as our ancestors, likewise too how we also mark major transitions within ones life cycle.

Some contemporary expressions of spirituality that point to an awareness of the sacred among people today.
*PRAYER: check out the spirituality/alternative section of any bookshop.
*OPENESS TO EASTERN PRACTICES: like meditation and yoga which both offer silence and escape in an increasingly noisy world.
*PILGRIMAGE: e.g. to Loch Derg which involves hardship and endurance, a spiritual journey where someone can take stock of their lives, seek forgiveness etc.

*ACTS OF KINDNESS & CHARITY: volunteering.

*TAIZE.

*Graduation – shows that we as a culture still have an understanding of meaning & value in our lives. Discuss what occurred at your own graduation, be up-beat and say how meaningful it was for you as an individual and collectivally for ye all as a group =)
Lough Derg: Pilgrims, Prayer and Penance

Situated on an island in Co. Donegal, Lough Derg or Station Island as it is also called, is famous for its unique style of pilgrimage. The island opens to pilgrims for just over two months during the summer and people spend three days making their journey around this sacred place. So what makes Lough Derg so different to other pilgrimage centers?

On the morning of their arrival, pilgrims take the boat from the mainland and cross the lake to the island. They must fast from midnight the night before and will continue this fast until the day they leave. After leaving their belongings in their rooms, pilgrims must now part company with their shoes. Along with fasting this is a sign that they are leaving the material world behind. It is also a sign that there are no barriers or divisions on Lough Derg, everyone who visits the island is equal.

The pilgrims have to complete nine stations during their stay on the island. Stations are prayers that are said while walking around the large stone penitential beds and standing or kneeling by the waters edge. Each station prayer finishes inside the Basilica. This constant moving around is necessary to prevent the pilgrims from falling asleep. During their first night on the island they must keep vigil – they are not supposed to sleep until ten o clock the following night!

All contact with the outside world is prevented during their stay, so pilgrims are not allowed bring mobile phones, stereos, walkmans or CD players, musical instruments or games. Newspapers are provided however and there is a small bookshop. Because they are fasting, pilgrims cannot bring food on the island, but they are given a meal, which consists of black tea or coffee and dry toast or oatcakes. This can only be eaten once a day but the pilgrims can eat as much as they like at each sitting.

The pilgrims leave the island on the third morning. Difficult as it is, this combination of fasting, lack of sleep and station prayers do not manage to put people off the idea of returning. Stripped of all their basic requirements, those who visit the island have the opportunity to pray and meditate without any fear of interruption and learn to appreciate the simple things in life.

Comments: “I have been coming here for almost twenty years. I come from the midlands so I get the special bus from Bus Aras in Dublin. I feel like I am able to leave the world behind when I visit Lough Derg. There is no noise, nobody trying to sell me rosary beads. It’s just me alone with my thoughts and my prayers.” Anne, 54.

“This is my first and maybe only visit to Lough Derg. I came here with my friends because we have just done our Leaving Cert and...well we thought the prayers would help. I am surprised to see so many young people here. I am finding very tough. The fasting isn’t so bad although I love my food! The hardest part was doing without sleep” Fergal, 18.
Section A: The Search for Meaning and Values

- identify three key people in the humanist tradition. In each case, briefly outline one key idea of their teaching...

Humanism is a philosophy or worldview that says there is nothing higher or other than HUMAN EXISTENCE. It came about particularly in the Rennaissance period.

**KEY PEOPLE IN THE HUMANIST TRADITION:**

**Karl Marx** was born at Trier on 5th May 1818. His father and mother were of Jewish origin, but in 1824 the family became Protestant. Later on Marx totally rejected all forms of religion. Marx held the view that there have always been two opposing classes in society, the smaller class (the wealthy people), who exploit; and the larger class (the poor people), who are exploited. This leads to conflict between the two classes. The exploiting class want to hold on to their privileged and domineering position, and so they refuse to allow the exploited class to share their wealth. However, the exploited class want to change things, so that they can have a fairer share of wealth. In the end, the exploited class will have to revolt violently against the dominant class, to get a fairer share of wealth. But the exploited are reluctant to do this. Marx suggested the exploiting class invented God to help them maintain their domineering position. If they could claim that God gave them the right to be wealthy, then the poor might remain poor. And this ruse of the wealthy was successful. The exploited class were willing to believe in God and his love. This belief helped them. They could put up with misery and exploitation in this life if they believed that, after death, they would enjoy happiness in heaven, and the exploiters would go to hell and suffer. Marx thought the poor should have challenged the rich people; that the poor should have tried to get a better life now on earth. Instead, the poor willingly believed in God, and they accepted the help of priests to worship God. They thought that God wanted them to suffer in this life. So

**French Existentialism - Jean Paul Sarte**

Life has no meaning. God does not exist.

Freedom and individual the most important.

*In a godless universe life has no meaning or purpose beyond the goals each man sets for himself.*

“Man is condemned to be Free”

Humanism is a philosophy or worldview that says there is nothing higher or other than HUMAN EXISTENCE. It came about particularly in the Renaissance period.
God was a consolation to them in their misery. He was their 'opium'. The goal of Marxism is the elimination of the problem of evil from human history. The classless state is saviour and judge. All man’s suffering will be justified by the eventual arrival of the classless paradise.

- **Albert Camus** (1913-1960) was a man preoccupied with the contrast between life's undeniable beauty and hopefulness and death's inevitable negation of both. Should we let the beauty tempt us to hope for a divine immortality, or should we recognize that death allows us only despair? Camus' basic insight is that of the tragedy of existence, which is expressed most painfully through the suffering of children, the most atrocious image of evil. That is his proof that God does not exist. To Camus of all the evils of mankind hope is "the most dreadful evil of all." And the cruelest burden man has to carry is his own intelligence. The intelligence, by its very nature, demands meaning in a world where there is no meaning. It is a world "in which the impossibility of knowledge is established, in which everlasting nothingness seems the only reality, and irremediable despair seems the only attitude." Faced with evil, without ever being discouraged, men and women can only revolt and constantly renew their efforts to reduce the injustice and sufferings around them. They must be like Sisyphus, the legendary figure in Greek mythology who was condemned by the gods constantly to push an enormous boulder up to the top of a mountain, only to have it roll back again as soon as he arrived at the summit. Camus wrote a book entitled The Myth of Sisyphus that outlines the core of this absurdist doctrine. Sisyphus is Camus' metaphor for man: ceaselessly struggling to succeed, only to fail and fail and finally to die. Sisyphus is also the metaphor for lucidity within man. The realization of his revolt against the facts makes him take each day with utter lucidity, with total and full consciousness. By "lucidity" Camus means that man must be aware of everything going on around him. If every man is condemned to death at birth, each new day when he awakes alive is a reprieve from death. So he develops a passion for earthly life, no matter how ugly fate might make it.

- Lucidity requires living fully in each passing moment, a passionate commitment to fight the irresistible "plague" which is death. It is an indifference to the future and a desire to use up everything "given." In the end, however, man is still really only pretending. What good is it all? "The whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing." Camus knows this, and so he calls his philosophy absurdist. Man acts "as if" he attempts to create a meaningful life out of nothing by his courageous revolt against meaninglessness and his lucidity, wringing every bit of living out of the present moment. Camus recognized that even if human beings succeeded in eliminating all the evils which they caused, there would always be suffering because of their limited and mortal condition.
So despite the prodigious progress of medicine, human beings will never be totally invulnerable physically and psychologically. Human beings will always inevitably be confronted with sickness and death. That having been said, he maintained people must never give up this fight against suffering and evil.

**Reductionism:**
Reductionism refers to the process of reducing an entity down to its smallest constituent parts. It began as a scientific method where science broke things down to learn more. Reductionism refers to the belief that humans are part of the physical, tangible world and no more than that, if something cannot be studied in a methodical scientific way it cannot be known. Reductionism rules out - speculation, opinion, feeling, superstition etc. It reduces everything to its parts however, many argue that if you only reduce everything to its parts it looses its meaning i.e. a novel looses its themes and greater concerns if you only look at letters individually. Human beings are more than just a collection of atoms and DNA. Reductionism denies that we are more than the sum of our parts.

- define and explain atheism and agnosticism

**Atheist:** someone who believes there is no God  
**Agnostic:** someone who is not sure if there is a God. There may be a God but there is not convincing evidence for or against the existence of God.

ATHIESM IS: Atheism may be defined as ‘the conscious rejection of a theistic entity creating and controlling human life and natural phenomena’. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries in particular have seen a rise in atheism as a philosophical alternative Christianity and other religious traditions. The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on rationalism and the primacy of the scientific understanding of reality, witnessed the emergence of atheism as an alternative discourse as the influence of Christianity began to weaken. Atheism is not just a rejection of the tenets of Christianity but of Islam and other religious traditions also. In some Muslim societies it may be both dangerous and considered a criminal offence to be an atheist if the stance is linked to apostasy (the deliberate disavowal of belief in the orthodox tenets of a religion). Apostasy and punishment have been found in both Christianity and Islam. The Inquisition in Christianity and the fact that apostasy is punishable by death in the Qur’an, are two notorious examples of large scale reactions to people’s declaration of non-belief. In Islam, apostasy is usually applicable to people who leave the faith and join another.

**Atheism**  
Atheism is the denial of the existence of God. Atheism can take a number of forms:
**Theoretical atheism:** a denial of God’s existence. Reasons given for theoretical atheism include the belief that science and religion are incompatible and the supposed impossibility of reconciling a belief in a loving God with the existence of evil in the world.

**Practical atheism or religious indifference:** a denial of God’s existence based upon the belief that the question of God’s existence is of no consequence.

**Militant atheism:** a denial of God’s existence based upon the belief that religious belief is a harmful aberration that retards human progress.

**AGNOSTICISM IS:** Agnosticism may be defined as ‘the suspension or putting aside of acceptance and rejection of religious belief. Agnostics in general are undecided or unsure whether or not to believe in God. The question of God’s existence remains open.

**Agnosticism**
Scepticism either denies that the human person is capable of knowing the truth or that there is such a thing as objective truth. Agnosticism is a form of scepticism that expresses the belief that the human mind is incapable of knowing whether or not God exists. For the most part, agnosticism is based upon the view that we can have no knowledge of that which goes beyond the limits of the material, scientific world.

- briefly outline two cosmologies of modern science

**Cosmology:** We have evidence that even the earliest scientists sought to understand the **cosmos** – the order of the universe as a whole. Cosmology simply put is: the study of and theories about the origin and nature of the Universe

**Cosmology asks three basic questions:**
1. How did the universe begin? Big Bang Theory
2. How did it get to its present state? Expanding and cooling universe
3. What is its future? Big Crunch or Heat Death

1. **Big Bang / Flaring Forth.** -The current scientific theory about cosmic origins, the simultaneous emergence of space and time in a ‘hot bang’ singularity 15/18 billion years ago with a big explosion resulting in a rapidly expanding and cooling universe. This theory suggests that the universe is expanding all the time. Contrast this with the Steady State Theory. The Big bang theory is based on one of the fundamental laws of physics – the second law of thermodynamics. This law states that every day the universe becomes more and more disordered. There is a gradual descent into chaos … examples of this are everywhere, **buildings fall down, people grow old, shorelines are eroded etc.** It is argued that the opposite to these things is also occurring i.e. babies being born etc. However, the law states that creating order in one part of the world has the effect of creating disorder in another. E.g. if a new building is built materials are depleted and the energy exhausted is lost forever.

- briefly explain each of the following non-religious responses to the questions of life:
Q’s to think about: Atheists believe there is no God - How might this affect the way an atheist looks at birth, serious illness and death?

Agnostic are not sure if there is a God - How might this affect the way an agnostic looks at birth, serious illness and death?

**Concepts of God**

### 3.1 The gods of the ancients

The concept of God is common to all religions. From the very beginning people had an idea of God/gods who created the world and were worshipped because of this. The concept of God developed and progressed as human beings developed and learned more about the world in which they lived. The idea of God moved from a mythical understanding to a more rational understanding. In agricultural societies the images and understanding of God are linked to the land and the cycle of the seasons. Each generation in every culture faced the big questions of life: what is the meaning and purpose of life, why do people suffer, where have we come from, what is the ultimate destiny of humanity? Their experience of life and their knowledge shaped their understanding of God. Humanity’s continuing search for meaning and values has influenced the concept of God within the various cultures.

- give two examples of the gods in ancient myths

Theistic myths = myths about God. The God’s of Northern and Western Europe were God’s of Thunder rain and wind. Perhaps this reflects the darker atmosphere of this part of the world. This shows how the culture effected their understanding of God.

“Pantheon” = refers to a particular recognised gods of a particular culture. The Greek Pantheon gives us insight into the values of that culture. While there are many gods and goddesses in the Greek pantheon, twelve principal gods emerge as the most important.

**Greek myth: Zeus**

These comprise of Zeus and his family, who lived on Mount Olympus and were thought to rule the world. Zeus was strong and powerful; he was a father, husband and head of the family; however he had the failings of a mortal man. Zeus was a sky god, concerned particularly with the weather, and his symbol was a thunderbolt. The following is a myth concerning Zeus and tells us something about his character.
Only Zeus, the Father of Heaven, might wield the thunderbolt; and it was with the threat of its fatal flash that he controlled his quarrelsome and rebellious family on Mount Olympus.

A time came when he became so proud and intolerable that his wife, Hera, Poseidon, Apollo and all the other family surrounded him suddenly when he lay asleep on his couch and bound him with rawhide thongs, knotted into a hundred knots, so that he could not move. He threatened them with instant death, but they had placed his thunderbolt out of his reach and laughed insultingly at him. While they were celebrating their victory, and jealously discussing who was to be successor, Thetis the Nereid, foreseeing a civil war on Olympus, hurried in search of the 100-handed Briareus, who swiftly untied the thongs, using every hand at once, and released his master. Because it was Hera who had led the conspiracy against him, Zeus hung her up from the sky with a golden bracelet around both wrists and an anvil fastened to either ankle. The other deities were vexed, but dared attempt no rescue for all her piteous cries. In the end, Zeus undertook to free her if they swore never more to rebel against him, and this each in turn grudgingly did.

**Nordic myth: Thor**

The gods that emerged from Northern and Western Europe were gods of thunder, rain and wind. Perhaps this reflected the colder, darker atmosphere of this part of the world. This is an example of how the culture of a people affected their understanding of God. The mythology of the Nordic culture is one that depicts the constant struggle against the forces of darkness and chaos. The Nordic gods often engaged in violent battles against the forces of evil, which were depicted as giants and monsters. Thor is probably the best known of the Nordic gods. He was the god of thunder. He is described as a huge bearded figure, who was armed with a hammer, iron gloves and a girdle of strength. He was an outspoken god with an enormous appetite for food and drink!

Thor, rising from sleep one day, found that his hammer was gone. This makes him so angry that his beard shakes, and his whole body trembles. Accompanied by his assistant Loki, he goes to Freyja (woman!) to ask if Loki may borrow her wings so that he can fly to Jotunheim, the land of the giants and to find out if they are the ones who stole his hammer.

At Jotunheim, Loki meets Thrym, the king of the giants, who boasts that he has hidden the hammer seven leagues under the earth. He adds that the gods will not get the hammer back until Thrym is given to Freyja for his bride.

Loki returns and tells Freyja to put on her wedding attire for she is (alas) to wed the king of the giants. Freyja is furious and says that people will think she is man-mad if she agrees to marry a giant! Then the god Heimdall comes up with an idea. What if Thor dresses up as a bride. With his hair up and two stones under his tunic he will look like a woman. Thor isn’t enthusiastic about the idea but he agrees to do it, since it is the only way he will ever get his hammer back. So Thor allows himself to be dressed in bridal costume with Loki as his bridesmaid.

When the gods arrive at Jutunheim, the giants prepare the wedding feast. But during the feast, Thor devours and entire ox and eight salmon. He also drinks three barrels of beer. Thrym is astonished. The true identity of the god is nearly revealed. But Loki manages to avert the danger by explaining that Freyja has been looking forward to coming to Jutunheim so much that she has not eaten for a week. When Thrym lifts the bridal veil to kiss the bride,
he is startled to find himself looking into Thor’s burning eyes. Loki rescues the situation by saying that the bride has not slept for a whole week because of the excitement and anticipation of the day. At this, Thrym commands that the hammer be brought up and placed on the hands of the bride during the wedding ceremony. Thor roars with laughter when he is given the hammer. He kills Thrym with it, and he wipes out the giants and all their kin.

This god of thunder has a huge appetite. The loss of the hammer could represent a drought and consequent crop failure. Recovery of the hammer could be the coming of spring, arrival of hope.

THUNDER BOLT: The thunderbolt, a symbol associated with both Zeus and Jupiter, indicates their control of rain and storms and their vast power to protect or destroy fertility. Storms manifest the great creative force of a god. The thunderbolts of lightning were used to punish those who broke the moral and social codes.

- explain and give two examples of polytheism & describe briefly the emergence of monotheism.

Examples of polytheism:

Hinduism is sometimes described as a polytheistic religion. With a history of four thousand years it is a belief system containing many gods. The majority of Hindu villages have their own god whom they venerate. There is no founder or prophet in Hinduism and it has no ecclesiastical structures nor central creed. Gods worshipped in Hinduism include Shiva, Vishnu or his incarnations (especially Krishna or Rama) and thousands of other local gods.

Hinduism dates back to the second millennium B.C. after the Ayran invasion of north India. The Vedas (oldest sacred texts of Hinduism) come from the Ayrans. Other strands of Hinduism grew out of this Vedic tradition. Agni is the god of fire and sacrifice, restoring life to all beings. He also unites heaven, earth and the atmosphere in between. Indra is the god of war and the sky god. He represents the archetype of the forces that originate life and he is the fertility god. This omnipresent god represents fruitfulness, for he has abundant vitality: he is responsible for the fruitfulness of women, fields and animals. At weddings he is invoked so that the bride may give birth to ten sons. Varuna is another sky god – he upholds the cosmic order and uses powers to punish and reward.

Hindus believe that Brahman is the ultimate source of their existence. Brahman is a distant, all-powerful god; he is the creator and the basis for all existence. He is an abstract concept, devoid of anthropomorphic images. He has no attributes, no form and has no task – he is omnipresent yet imperceptible. He has to be approached through a number of more accessible deities, the principal ones being:

- **Brahma** – the creator who brings the Universe into existence
- **Vishnu** – who preserves life and all living things, working for good and controlling fate, salvation of moral order and redemption of humanity; Vishnu’s work is carried out traditionally through his incarnations, such as the gods Krishna and Rama; Krishna is the hero of myths such as the Bhagavad Gita (Krishna is the lover, warrior king), Rama is the noble hero who combated evil in the world;
- **Shiva** – source of good and evil, destroys life but re-creates new life;

Mahadevi, the goddess, is also a principal deity in Hinduism. Hindus frequently have a favourite deity and they may have a shrine to them in their homes. A more devotional relationship can be enjoyed with more personalised gods, such as Shiva and Vishnu.
Shinto is another example of polytheistic religion. Shinto is a Japanese religion. It means ‘shen’ - divine being and ‘tao’ - way of the gods. Gods or spirits of Shinto are numerous. They are known as ‘kami’ and have special powers. Shinto legend has it that the gods controlled the cosmos and came down to earth and inhabited any special elements of the landscape.

Amaterasu – sun goddess is the supreme god in Shinto.
Izanagi and Izanami were creator gods – brother and sister as well as lovers.

Monotheism means the belief in one God. The three great monotheistic world religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The development of monotheism is closely linked to the history of Judaism. Both Christianity and Islam trace their roots to the faith of the Israelites. The monotheistic stance of Judaism was a clear departure from the cult practices of the ancient Semitic civilization. The existence of many divine beings in the ancient near East was unquestioned. Documentary evidence for the Israelites’ monotheistic stance dates back to the 6th century B.C. but most likely pre-dates documentary evidence. Monotheism for the Jews involved a special covenant relationship with Yahweh (God). Their strict first commandment was to worship no other god but Yahweh. Images of God were also prohibited (a prohibition that was most unusual in religious traditions in the ancient Near East at that time, since all ancient gods were symbolised by images, mostly anthropomorphic ones).

- explain the concept of God in each of the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The concept of God in the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Judaism

In Judaism, Yahweh cannot be reduced to mere human representations or images. The Old Testament attributes certain human traits to Yahweh. Yahweh is at the heart of the close covenant relationship with the Jews. This relationship is written about in terms of a husband/wife or a father/child relationship. Personal communication is important to the relationship. Yahweh is not abstract or impersonal. Yahweh speaks and acts, unlike the idols of surrounding nations of the Near East at that time. The Genesis creation account (Adam and Eve) shows this relationship in action. It also demonstrated human ethical responsibility resulting from Yahweh’s creation of us. God was known by various names by the Israelites: El (‘Holy One’, showing the transcendence of God), Elohim, Shaddai (‘The Almighty’, from early Patriarchal literature). Yahweh is the most common name for God in Judaism. It closely mirrors the verb to be – ‘I am who am’. It is a name suggesting a creator, one who brings life into being.
Christianity
The Old Testament concept of God was passed down through the Christian tradition. However, for Christians this great almighty God became a human being in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, thus the person of Jesus is the fullness of God’s self-revelation. Many titles were used to name Jesus: Kyrios/Lord – replacing the Jewish name for Yahweh, stressing the authority of Jesus as universal Lord. Jesus was also called the Messiah – anointed one, linked to Jewish kings who were anointed. The Messiah would establish in the world the reign of God. Linked to the notion of the Messiah is the concept of the Suffering Servant or the Son of Man. The title prophet was also used – an eschatological prophet who would be killed because of what he stood for, like prophets before him. The title High Priest was also used – the paschal mystery, the sacrifice for sins symbolised by the cross. Jesus is referred to as the New Covenant, sympathising with sinners. The New Testament uses titles such as Bread of Life and Good Shepherd. Jesus reveals god through his person, his words and actions. This is reflected in his key teachings in the New Testament such as the Beatitudes and the command to love one another. These teachings reveal God to be compassionate and merciful, forgiving and close to the poor and persecuted. The concept of God in Christianity is Trinitarian. God is a communion of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, revealed in the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. This God of love extends to enemies, is all embracing and forgiving. St. Augustine described the dynamic as love: the Father is the One who loves, the Son is loved and the Holy Spirit is love itself. This inclusive description of love gives us insight not just into God but into humanity and the meaning of our existence. Christians are called to love – even one’s enemies.

Islam
In Islam god is revealed in the Qur’an, the sacred text that is understood literally as God’s word. The Qur’an offers 99 names for God or Allah but the most important is his status as God alone. The creed is taken from the first line of the Qur’an and is recited by Muslims five times a day. It is a simple monotheistic statement: ‘There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet’. Muhammad’s struggle against the polytheism of the Arabian tribal religions of his culture resulted in the foundation of Islam. The concept of the Incarnational and Trinitarian God of Christianity is contrary to the beliefs of Muslims. Monotheism has many practical implications for the daily life of Muslims. It is linked to the belief in the fundamental equality of all people before God and therefore demands social justice. As well as the Oneness of God, Muslims place emphasis on the transcendence of God: Allah is the creator and there is a real gulf between Allah and humans.
Muslims must not associate any other god with Allah (this is known as the sin of *shirk*) nor use any images or representations to depict Allah. Islam means ‘submission to God’, so all of human life must be lived under God’s command. The belief in the absolute otherness of God places Muslims at variance with Christians over the Incarnation – a central tenet of Christian faith the God became human in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Muslims still see Allah’s engagement with the world. They emphasise the merciful nature of Yahweh and his creative power in the universe. Each chapter (sura) in the Qur’an begins with the words ‘In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate’. Also important in Islam is the notion of Allah’s judgment at the end of time as well as Allah’s lordship over human origins, nature and destiny. Thus, the sovereignty of God is all-important in Islam. Allah’s authority is not questioned.

**Judaism/Christianity**
There are many Jewish images of God, many of these can be found in Jewish scriptures i.e. The Old Testament. The Jewish people, they believed that they alone were God’s chosen people ever since the Covenant was made with Abraham (the first Patriarch/founding Father). The Jewish view of God is one of a distant God, one who punishes those who are unfaithful e.g. Adam and Eve, the plagues in Egypt, Noah and the flood etc. There are many images of God in the old Testament e.g. Psalm 18:2 a rock - this image reflects the belief that God is a refuge, a place where a person is safe, a place of strength one can turn to in their time of need.

**Christianity**
The Christian view of God as found in the New Testament is influenced greatly by Jesus’ teaching. Jesus (a Jew) wanted to change how the Jewish people viewed God. He called him Abba – Father, which reflects a belief in a closer more personal God. Jesus also presented a view of God for all people even gentiles (non-Jews), which went against the idea of the Jews being God’s chosen people. Jesus used parables to teach people about the kingdom of God. In Luke 15:11 Jesus tells the parable of the Prodigal (wasteful) Son – in this parable Jesus is saying that God is extremely forgiving and will not be content until all have returned to him. The parable shows us that i) forgiveness is a gift from God ii) just as God forgives we are also challenged to forgive (just as the older son is in the parable)

**Islam**
The Islamic view of Allah/God is one of someone who is all-powerful and knowing – as the word Islam itself means “submission to the will of Allah”. Muslims believe that the Quran is a miracle as it is the direct word of Allah. They also believe that the human mind cannot hope to comprehend Allah therefore it is a sin to attempt to depict Allah in art etc. There are no images/statues etc in a mosque. Muslims show Allah great respect (refer to prayer movements and opening of each surah of the Quran)

### 3.2 The concept of revelation
- **explain the concept of divine revelation**
Transcendent: means to go beyond or extend normal boundaries, a transcendent God extends to the spiritual or unknowable definition of society. If God is unknowable images of God therefore come from divine revelation. This means that human beings cannot know God fully but can move closer to an understanding of God. Divine revelation: whereby God discloses himself to humankind. Divine revelation takes a number of forms:

Universal revelation: Where God makes himself known to all people, at all times, in all places. This revelation gives rise to basic religious faith of a community. God Is Known Through His Creation

Looking at a beautiful sunset or a flower etc. people sometimes see only its own beauty. For others the beauty can cause them to wonder at what they see and at the source of this beauty - the Creator. In other words the person believes that what he / she sees is created by someone, and that he/she can dimly see the Creator himself through/in/ behind his creation. This person might then conclude that whoever has created such beautiful things is himself beautiful, or see the goodness of God behind his creation, for only someone who is good could create such wonderful things.

Particular, historical revelation: God revealed himself in particular moments of history e.g. 610 AD on Mt. Hira – Islam. God Is Known In History

God is understood to have revealed himself to the people of Israel in Old and New Testament times. Bible is written primarily as a response to an experience of God - a revelation. This revelation, tells people something about God and mankind as the various happenings of the times were seen as God telling them about himself. For example in Hosea’s time many of his fellow countrymen were worshipping false gods. Life was getting more and more difficult. Wars, famines, and all sorts of catastrophes added to the burden. Hosea knew what was wrong. God was angry with the people because they had turned away from him. If only they would stop and repent God would take them back. God's love was that great. But how could Hosea explain this to the people? Inspiration 'hit him' so to speak. Why not present the situation as a breakdown in a marriage between God (husband) and Israel (wife)? The wife, (Israel) has been unfaithful to her husband. Hosea presents this broken marriage as an event in his own life. His wife has left him. She lives with other men, and doesn't want to return. And yet, Hosea still loves her and can't forget her. He follows her even into the wilderness and eventually persuades her to return as his wife. If a man's love for a woman can be so strong, how much stronger is God's love for his people? The people got the message - about God and themselves! Similarly Deuteronomy 15:7-10 tells us a lot about God and mankind at the time when Israel had begun to settle in Canaan - “If there is among you a poor man, one of your brothers, in any of your towns within the land which the Lord your God has given you. You shall not harden your heart against you brother, or shut your hand against him, but you shall open your hand and lend him sufficient for his need,
whatever it may be.... Because of this, the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all you undertake.”

This shows that God is someone who demands justice because he has given land and possessions to his people. Because he is just, man must also be just. Because God had to demand this of man, we can see that some people in Israel had failed to be just as their God was. The writer of this piece is saying that he understands God in this way because of the way he has seen him dealing with his people, and he tells people, as if it was God himself speaking, that they too must be just.

3. Jesus Christ Reveals God in a Unique Way

In Christianity the statement that Jesus is God and the greatest revelation people could ever have is balanced by the statement that he was also man - Jesus of Nazareth. The belief that Jesus was both God and Man leads Christians to ask what Jesus taught about God and Man. But perhaps the greatest revelation of all Jesus gave Christians was that death no longer held its terrible power over mankind. God raised Jesus up and in doing so promised eternal life to all who follow him. In this the universal nature to God’s revelation is seen clearly for all human beings face death.

- explain the significance of divine revelation in two different religious traditions & show the impact of the concept of divine revelation on religious practice and on the interpretation of religious texts in the two religious traditions

Islam: We receive a lot of our evidence on the origin if Islam from their Sacred text ‘The Qur’an’. The earliest evidence of Muhammad’s life is taken from his biography Sira written by Ibn Ishaq in 767. Inspiration: Muhammad claimed that the Qur’an was dictated to him word for word by God’s messenger Angel Gabriel. The Qur’an is received as a miracle of God by Muslims as Muhammad was believed to be illiterate.

Revelation: In 610AD while in the cave on Mount Hira Muhammad received a revelation from the angel Gabriel (God’s messenger) who told him that he was a prophet to the people. This night is known as the night of power and excellence. Muhammad came back to Mecca and only told Khadijah and his cousin Ali, these are Islam’s first converts. In 613AD Muhammad received another revelation where he was told to rise and warn the people of Mecca. Vision/Dream: Muhammad’s revelation’s came to him in a vision/dream like experience of many voices which slowly merged into one. In 613 he was told that *There is only one God Allah. *All believers are equal before Allah. *Trust in Allah as nothing happens but for the will of Allah. *The rich must share with the poor. *Live your life in preparation for the day of Judgement. Sacred Text: The story of Islam and it’s teachings were handed down by word of mouth until they were all written down in the Qur’an (Islam’s sacred text) ‘The term Qur’an means that which is to be read. It was originally written in Arabic and contains 114 surahs (chapters). The opening surah is the model for Islamic prayer: “Praise be to God, Lord of the world; The compassionate, the merciful King on the day of reckoning...etc”
Section A: The Search for Meaning and Values

The Qur'an identifies basic beliefs of Islam and gives strict guidelines for Muslim life. Muslims should not drink alcohol, eat pork, divorce etc and also lays down strict punishments for breaking laws e.g. cutting off a thief's hand if he persists in wrong doing. Muslims also have great respect for the Bible and call Christians and Jews 'people of the book'. They believe that the word of Allah can be found in the Bible and other Christian/Jewish holy books but it is mixed with too many human additions only in the Qur'an can the pure word of God be found.

**Christianity:**

Central role of Jesus Christ. While they believe the O.T. is rich in revelation they feel Jesus is the high point of God’s revelation to the people. Death and resurrection is the climax and summation of God’s interaction with humanity. **Incarnation** – God becomes man in the person of Jesus Christ. **Jesus' Death - An Understanding.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus, the suffering servant</th>
<th>In the Old Testament Isaiah speaks of a man who will suffer because of Our sins. He will rebuild the relationship between God and his people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus, the Paschal Lamb</td>
<td>Just as the Hebrews put blood on the doorpost during the Passover, so too Jesus blood would be used to save us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus, the New Covenant</td>
<td>Jesus died so we would forever have a relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus, died for our Sins</td>
<td>Throughout the Old Testament God made a covenant with his people. With Abraham, Moses and Jesus God made a new bond with his people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE DEATH OF JESUS REMOVED ANY BARRIERS BETWEEN GOD AND US!**

This revelation will reach its fulfilment when Jesus returns at the end of time. The belief in the ongoing nature of this revelation has influenced interpretations of scripture in the Christian tradition. The gospels recognise the role of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection in divine revelation which is ongoing. The liturgy of the Eucharist, in which the continued presence of Jesus is celebrated is a key ritual. Christians believe the Bible is the inspired word of God whereas Muslims believe the Qur'an is the direct word of Allah.

- outline the understanding of the transcendent in two religious traditions.

In the search for meaning and values it becomes clear that some things are beyond normal grasp or definition; in other words they transcend the normal
material reality. (Think of things that are indescribable!!!) Religions have difficulty trying to describe the transcendent God ... Some actually forbid any attempts? (examples???) Christianity is unique in that it attempts to fuse the immanence and transcendence of God in the person Of Jesus Christ. In contrast, the notion of transcendent in Islam sees God as totally other, who communicates his will through the prophet Muhammad and the Qur’an.

Orthodox Christians stress the transcendence of God in two ways. First, they place great importance on negative statements about God. Thus it is important to say what God is not:
Ø God is not male or female
Ø God is not a human
Ø God is not made
Ø God is not touchable
Ø God is not visible
Ø God is not comprehensible
Ø God is not mortal etc.

Second, they distinguish between God’s essence and his energies.
Ø God's essence is that aspect of God that we can never know or approach
Ø God's energies are that aspect of God that we get to know through creation and through Jesus Christ

Orthodox Christians believe that their distinction between God's essence and energies shows that God is unapproachable, as God is so different from us and that people can approach God, through creation and through Jesus. By distinguishing God’s essence and energies, Orthodox Christians maintain that God is transcendent, even though they also believe that people can get to know God.

3.3 Naming God, past and present

- name and explain three traditional and three contemporary images of God

One of the most familiar images of God is “Father”, Jesus encouraged his apostles to call God “Abba” the close personal term Daddy showing a much more personal relationship with God than was known at the time. In the gospels of Luke and Mathew he taught the apostles to pray ... “Our Father ...hallowed be thy name.” This image of God as forgiving and all-loving can again be found in the New Testament in the story of “The Good Shepherd” who looks after all his “flock” or the parable of the “Prodigal (wasteful) Son” where God is the Father figure who offers forgiveness to all who seek it and challenges us to do the same.

One other traditional image of God is that of the supreme being/creator ... this can be found in the creation accounts from the book of Genesis. God creates the world and humanity in his image and saw that it was good. “So God created
humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”  Genesis 1:27

The image of God as creator expresses the belief that God existed prior to creation. The O.T. also has the image of the omnipotent (all-powerful) God that is evident throughout history. This image stemmed from the hardships of the Jewish people in slavery and how God intervened to save his chosen people in Egypt through a number of plagues.

CONTEMPORARY IMAGES OF GOD: We have many images of God in T.V./music etc. In the film “Bruce Almighty” Morgan Freeman plays God and the image draws on many traditional characteristics of God i.e. He is dressed all in white and displays many Divine qualities such as being omnipotent (can make Bruce suddenly have 7 fingers on one hand) omniscient (knows Bruce only ever won one fight against a girl with the sun in her eyes.) benevolent as well as drawing on many Bible references such as the parting of the red sea in a bowl of Tomato soup and walking on water. Where the film departs from traditional western images of God is that in this film God is African American.

Other ‘new’ images associated with God have been around for millennia but are only really utilised today. God as ‘Mother.’ In Isaiah God is likened to a woman in labour and a woman who cannot forget the child she has borne. In the New Testament there are also maternal images of God as a woman baking bread for example.

- explain and give an example of each of the following religious interpretations of contemporary human experience: the prophetic, the mystical, the holy, the poetic, the aesthetic
The prophetic: A prophet is someone who examines society and comments upon it in terms of their religious beliefs. They usually challenge the Status Quo. It is often suggested that prophets will never be excepted in their own time/place. They are often marginalised because people don’t necessarily want to hear what they have to say. Fr. Peter McVerry is described as one of the most prophetic people in Ireland today. He is a Jesuit priest who worked with the homeless for many years. He worked particular with young people from challenging backgrounds who had gotten involved with drugs and crime. What he saw appalled him but also challenged his values and opened his eyes to the very segregated society we live in. He called on the media to adopt a truly Christian response to the problems of poverty and deprivation and challenged a society that tolerates such divisions and equality. For him Justice and peace can only be attained when those who call themselves followers of Jesus truly live out the gospel values.

The mystical: Unlike the prophetic the mystical experience does not seek to challenge society or critique behaviour. It seeks to make an inner journey and leave behind the distractions of the world. The individual seeks to know God or the transcendent in a personal and intense way. Through meditation, prayer and contemplation the person may experience God. Mystical interpretation has become very popular in recent years perhaps as a reaction to an increasingly fast paced, materialistic society. Buddhism is an example of mystical interpretation on life = enlightenment & nirvana, emphasises meditation and that happiness is not to be found in the material aspects of this life. The mystical approach is common to all faiths.

Meditation is an inner quieting so that a person can come together within and focus attention on something. Christian meditation aims to focus on God and the mystery of God’s love using our thoughts, feelings and imagination. It helps us to make room for God in our lives. When the body is relaxed the mind can be focused on God by reciting a phrase from the bible or repeating a word. This may help us to draw attention to an aspect of God in our lives. Contemplation is a deep meditation without the use of words or thoughts - just the sense of being in union with God. It is purely an expression of the heart.

The holy:
The religious rituals of today are rooted in the past. To interpret the human experience as holy means to understand events in our lives as sacred. Birth, death, marriage & life choices are events in which God is seen as being present. When life is seen as holy, then special times are seen through ritual and prayer. Within Christianity – sacraments are seen as examples of this. These rituals are rich in symbolism and unite family, friends and community.

The poetic & The aesthetic:
People who are artistic and creative often choose to express their religious interpretation through poetry, music and art. (e.g. Bishop and Longley use
religious symbolism L.C. 2009 & Kavanagh is intensely focused on religion in his work L.C. 2010.) For many, great beauty suggests the presence of God. The writer John Shea has written poetry that is deeply religious but connected to everyday life. One of his poems is entitled ‘A prayer to God who will not go away’

Lord,
you are the poetry of wordless lives,
the salting of tasteless purposes,
the reminder that we are more than,
the sinking spiral of the dying sparrow
and that the reckless rush of the galaxies
marvel at the human collision of a kiss.
You are the tightening hope
that someone has stretched a net
beneath the high wire act of ours.

Here John Shea expresses the belief that it is God who gives meaning to our lives.

- outline the traditional proofs of God in the writings of Anselm, Aquinas, and two others.

**Argument from conscience**

John Newman, an English theologian who lived in the nineteenth century said that if we do something wrong then we feel bad about it. We may have enjoyed doing wrong, but our conscience makes us feel guilty about it, and we feel ashamed at what we have done, as we feel responsible for what we have done. On the other hand, if we do good, we feel pleased. Our conscience makes us feel proud because we feel we have acted responsibly. Now, argued Newman, if we feel responsible, proud and guilty about our behaviour, this implies that there must be someone to whom we are responsible - not to any human person, but to someone greater: a power beyond this world.

**Argument from moral order**

Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher who lived in the eighteenth century said that we know what is right and we know what is wrong. We also know that we should do right and avoid wrong, whatever the consequences – that is our duty. And each of us decides whether we do right or wrong. Nobody else decides for us. Now, argued Kant, if we do our duty and we do what is right, it should lead to the perfect society. And in this perfect society good people should be rewarded with a happy life. But we know that we do not have the perfect society on earth, and that good people do not always have the reward of happiness in this life. So Kant inferred from this that there must be a life after death, where good people are rewarded with happiness. And only a God could do this. So there must be a God. Kant stressed the weakness of Descrate’s argument from the idea of perfection by using the following comparison to show the weakness of the argument: it is not because I have the idea of hundred thalers (German money at the time of Kant) that these hundred thalers really exist in my purse! (Critique of Pure Reason, p.507).
Argument from the idea of God
Anselm (1033 – 1109) was a Christian who was born in Italy, moved to France where he was abbot of Bec in Normandy, and then to England, where he became archbishop of Canterbury. He thought that we could prove that God exists simply by looking carefully at the idea of God. His argument is short.
- What do we mean by God?
- Something perfect in all ways. We could not think of anything more perfect.
- But suppose God does not exist.
- Then he is not the most perfect thing we can think of.
- So, if God is the most perfect thing we can think of, then he must exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thomas Aquinas proofs of the existence of God</th>
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<td>Proof from causality –</td>
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<td>Proof from degrees of perfection to perfect being -</td>
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<td>Proof from the laws of nature –</td>
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Q. What life experiences/observations could have led Thomas Aquinas to develop this argument and draw this conclusion? Use examples / visual materials to illustrate your points.

Religion & the Emergence of values

4.1 Religion as a source of communal values
- outline the relationship between the understanding of the transcendent/God and the concept of the person in two religious traditions & give two examples of how these connections determine behavioural norms in religious traditions.
Draw some comparisons between the three classical monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Although united in their adherence to monotheism, the concept of God differs somewhat in these three world religions. A religion’s portrayal of God and its understanding of the divine/human relationship has behavioural/ethical implications that shape the manner in which the search for meaning and values is conceived.

From a religious perspective the quest for meaning and values leads into the realm of the sacred or transcendent. In each of the three religions above the concept of God and God’s relationship with humanity has resulted from different understandings of the individual and what constitutes right living.

**Judaism**

“So God created humankind in his image” (Genesis 1:27)

In the creation account from the book of Genesis and accounts of Jewish history in Exodus explain a lot about the Jewish understanding of God. The 2 creation accounts (briefly summarise) were written at a time when the Jews were in exile in Babylon. Feeling abandoned by their God the creation accounts remind them of the power of God who created light and order out of chaos. More importantly he created humanity, with whom he entered a unique relationship. Surely this God would not abandon them!

The second creation account outlines the ‘Fall’ — in the space of a few chapters the situation changes from being created and loved by God above all other creatures to being estranged from God. Although there is a view of the on-going relationship with God there is also the sense of distance for this people.

Other dominant themes ➔ *no-one has ever seen the face of God (burning bush)*  *humanity incapable of understanding the wonder of God – Jews did not even use his name – Yahweh.*  *strict rules on idols.*  *liberates the chosen people.*  *covenant*

We can see many concrete ways the concept of God influenced and affected the Jews. In their fidelity to the law (idea of sinfullness), their attitude to the land of Israel and worship, we can see how the relationship effects their daily lives.

**Christianity**

Same creation accounts & the 2 religions share a common heritage. The God of Judaism is the same God as revealed through Jesus in the New Testament. God created the universe, but is separate from it, existing before it. However, because he created it in such beauty and wonder, this leaves a big responsibility on us to be ‘Stewards’ to his creation. The creation is not ours we are entrusted guardianship, this
leads to environmental and ecological responsibilities. Creation is good but no aspect of it can be equal to the divine.

We are the high point of Creation, however our full potential is not realized until we are with God. ‘You made us for yourself, our hearts are restless until they find rest in you – Augustine of Hippo’

The Incarnation – God becoming human in Jesus. ‘whoever has seen me has seen the father’ John 14:9 Through the paschal mystery (life, death and resurrection of Jesus) we are redeemed, Jesus payed the ultimate atonement with God for our sins and now we share in the gift of the future resurrection. This belief in Jesus and understanding of God leads to big implications for Christians daily lives to live as Jesus lived or in modern terms ‘WHAT WOULD JESUS DO???’

Islam
The word Islam means ‘peace through submission to Allah.’ Qur’an is the direct word of Allah handed down to Muhammad. Key belief (Creed) is the Shahadah → “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.” The ‘oneness’ of God is central to Islam. Strict monotheism has influence for their worship and daily lives i.e. *strict rules on polytheism or raising anyone/thing above God.

The term most frequently used in reference to God in the Qur’an is ‘merciful.’ As is in Judaism & Christianity the Qur’an reminds Muslims that God’s creation is as a result of his generosity. People should therefore respond with reverence and gratitude. This attitude should pervade all aspects of their lives. Salat prayer movements the Rak’ah reflect their understanding of God as the different movements show…

Willingness to listen to Allah.

respect for Allah
submission to Allah

Prayer expresses the core belief of submission and worship due to Allah and is central to their daily lives as they pray 5 times a day and treat it with great respect ritually washing (wudu) beforehand and using a prayer mat. In the mosque there can be no images of Allah as Allah is beyond human understanding.

4.2 Secular sources of communal values

Non-religious responses to the great questions of life is a topic that has been a recurring theme throughout this section. Secularisation is the process by which culture defines itself in a ‘this-worldly’ context, one that in its most radical form, secularism excludes any reference to a religious, sacred or transcendent horizon of meaning.

• identify three key moments in the emergence of an independent secular value system
  ✓ The rise of secular humanism that has its origins in the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The development of a secularist outlook is closely associated with the rise of the modern scientific disciplines in subsequent centuries.
  ✓ The emergence of a ‘Human Rights’ culture in the wake of the French Revolution
  ✓ The development of Existentialism during the twentieth century, with a value system centred upon an expose of human freedom. Associated with the French philosophers Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, Existentialism made a significant contribution to the development of a contemporary form of secular humanism
  ✓ The emergence of Post-Modernity. Post-Modernity is a term used by philosophers, social scientists, art critics and social critics to refer to aspects of contemporary culture, economics and social conditions that are the result of the unique features of late 20th century and early 21st century life. Included are globalisation, consumerism, fragmentation of authority and the commodification of knowledge.
Identify three key moments in the emergence of a secular value system…

1. In comparison to the religious ‘other world’ view that existed to this point, the RENAISSANCE saw the development of secularism. (15\textsuperscript{th}/16\textsuperscript{th} Century.) Era of tremendous change and upheavals in the areas of Art, Literature, economics etc. Focus on the human person became central including human reason and overall individual potential. This is there period when HUMANISM developed. (*key words of this period ... creativity, achievements and scientific endeavour.*)

2. THE ENLIGHTENMENT …18\textsuperscript{th} Century. Philosophers in England, Ireland, France and Germany began looking at the world in a new way particularly due to political/socio situation at Europe at the time (Eng and French revolutions). Turning away from blindly following Church authority but saw human kind through reason could determine how the world should be organised. Motto “Have the courage to know.” As science and philosophy developed so did Coffee houses where people could exchange opinions and viewpoints. A period which focused on individual human rights and freedoms e.g. the French Revolution motto … ‘LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY.’
EXISTENTIALISM - the philosophy of the 20th Century. After the devastation of WW1 many were disillusioned and no longer cared for the values of the previous generation. They did not look to the Church for meaning but instead looked to themselves. The fact that one existed in the world was the starting point of one's philosophy. The freedom to make one's own choices and the dangers that accompany this is a central concern. Jean-Paul Sartre is one such philosopher. His work ‘man is condemned to be free’ focuses on how the person is solely responsible for their own life. In the existentialist world view there are no criteria for deciding right or wrong actions but each person is responsible for the choices they make. Existentialism made a very important contribution to modern Secular humanism with its focus on the individual and the ‘distrust’ of any meaning offered by other sources.

COMMUNAL VALUES SHAPED BY OTHER SOURCES OTHER THAN RELIGION…
Although secular world views do not look for meaning outside the human person there has been the emergence of many values found in religious world views e.g. equality of all people, the dignity of the human person, tolerance etc.
Modern non-religious sources of these such values:
THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT
THE FAMILY
‘Western’ societies where the non-religious sources of communal values tend to centre upon the need to support the existence of liberal democracy. The core communal value associated with liberal cultures is that of tolerance. Tolerating differences within certain limits is premised upon two other core values, namely the freedom and equality of all citizens. These values normally find expression under the umbrella of a commitment to some form of a human rights culture.

List of values:
- Self sufficiency
- Peace
- Wealth
- Freedom
- Happiness
- National identity
- Equality
- Security
- Trust etc.
- Patience
- Family
- Wealth
- National identity
- Trust etc.

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The feminist movement:
Can be traced to the French revolution. Women were involved in all levels in the upheaval. Feminism brought the values of equality to the political, social and personal areas of life. It allowed women to speak up in a way that had been unheard of in the twentieth century. The voices of women influenced how laws were made. These legislations provided protection for all citizens.

The Family:
Our family teaches us values in both an implicit (see and experience – good example) and explicit (learn that some behaviours are good/some are bad) way. Sometimes values are contradictory – slapping a child for hitting another child.

THREE WAYS RELIGION INTERACTS WITH SECULAR CULTURE…

Even though we live in a very secular world however, religion has not disappeared from our world. Sometimes religion and secular co-exist. Religious rituals still take on great importance in our society with Weddings, Communions etc. Often major religions will consult with governments e.g. because of their concern with the value of human life the Irish Catholic Bishops have met with the Irish government regarding stem cell research legislation in Europe. They also make submissions to the government at budget time regarding work for justice through various organisations e.g. The St. Vincent de Paul.
Many laws in Ireland still mirror religious viewpoints such as the fact that Abortion is illegal here.

Different ways in which religions relate to secular culture vary from those that advocate a Theocracy to those that advocate complete separation of Church and State.