OCR H573 | INDEPENDENT REVISION

A* Model Essay

Twentieth-Century Language

Philosophy of Religion

Discuss whether falsifiability is the most useful test of meaning in religious statements.

1,552 response words | Complete annotated PDF | Individual topic edition

What is included

A complete original response, an argument plan, paragraph-level AO1/AO2 annotations and source works for further reading.

A* describes the intended style of this teaching model. This is independently written, not an OCR-marked script or a guaranteed grade.

Use this model to study argument and evaluation, then write your own answer. Do not submit it as your own assessed work.

Individual-use digital edition | 10 November 2026

Argument plan

Discuss whether falsifiability is the most useful test of meaning in religious statements.

Thesis: Falsification provides the strongest diagnostic challenge to religious assertions because it asks what they exclude and exposes qualification that removes cognitive content. It is not the greatest complete account of religious language: Hare and Mitchell show how worldviews and trust exceed isolated hypothesis-testing, Hick supplies possible verification, and Wittgenstein explains the diverse uses in which religious words gain meaning. Falsification is therefore indispensable as a test of intellectual accountability but insufficient as a general theory of meaning.

1. Flew reveals that an apparent assertion can lose content when every counterexample is absorbed by a new qualification.

Counter-argument: A non-physical God and a complex doctrine should not be tested as though they were simple scientific objects.

Interim judgement: Falsification is the best safeguard against empty realism, provided principled qualification is distinguished from evasion.

2. Hare's bliks explain how religious language can orient a whole life without functioning as an ordinary hypothesis.

Counter-argument: A blik may be sane or insane and does not preserve the believer's claim that God actually exists.

Interim judgement: Hare illuminates non-cognitive significance but cannot replace truth-sensitive evaluation.

3. Mitchell's partisan shows that committed trust may remain cognitive and evidence-sensitive.

Counter-argument: The parable supplies no clear threshold at which adverse evidence should defeat faith, and its initial encounter may overstate ordinary religious warrant.

Interim judgement: Mitchell gives the most balanced reply to Flew, although he needs an independent account of justified initial trust.

4. Hick and Wittgenstein reveal forms of meaning not captured by immediate falsification.

Counter-argument: Delayed verification and community-specific use can become ways to postpone or insulate truth claims.

Interim judgement: They provide the fuller account of meaning only when eschatological and language-game claims remain publicly criticisable.