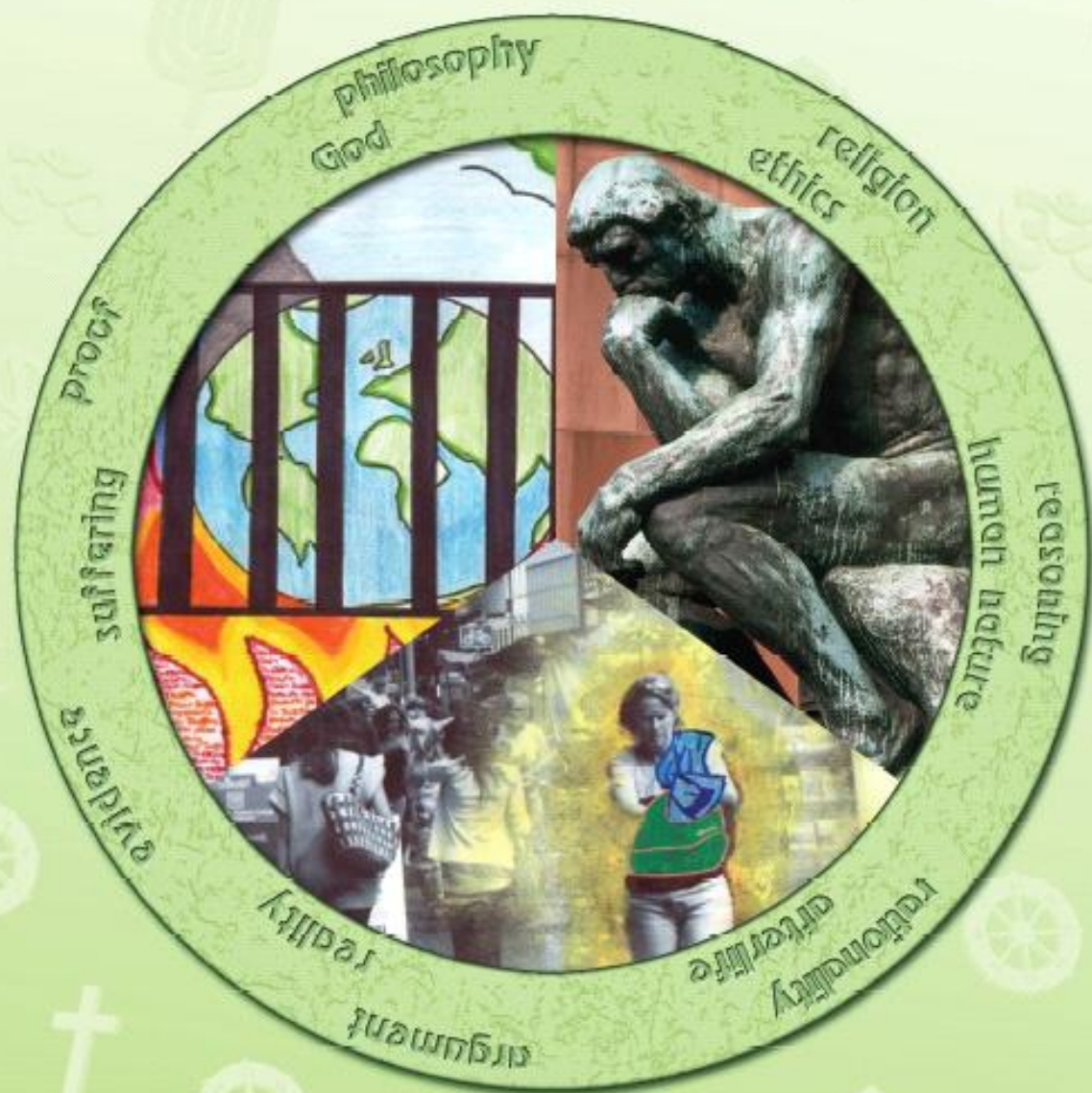


# Philosophical RE

Edited by Lat Blaylock



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# What is God like?

## For the teacher

Ultimate questions often include questions about the existence and nature of God. This work enables pupils in the 11–14 age range to deepen their understanding of ideas about God. This links with themes of the English *Non-Statutory National Framework for RE*: 'key ideas and questions of meaning in religions and beliefs, including issues related to God'.

### Achievements expressed as 'I can...' statements:

#### Level 3: I can...

- Describe two different ways in which people see God
- Describe my own ideas about God
- Identify the impact of respecting God's name.

#### Level 4: I can ...

- Show that I understand links between the behaviour of different religious groups and their ideas about God.

#### Level 5: I can...

- Use philosophical words and metaphor to explain some similarities and differences in the images of God that various religions use.

## Resources

- <http://www.arthafez.com/index.htm> – Beautiful colour calligraphy and explanation of the 99 names of God in Islam.
- [www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts](http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts) – Superb collections of pupils' artwork for RE on the theme 'Where is God?'
- [www.thechurchofyhwh.org/GINGN/gingn.htm](http://www.thechurchofyhwh.org/GINGN/gingn.htm) – Christian site with very user-friendly unpacking of the meanings behind the name of God in Jewish and Christian scripture.
- [www.mp3raid.com/search/mp3/gloria\\_gaynor.html](http://www.mp3raid.com/search/mp3/gloria_gaynor.html) pg2 'I am what I am.' Download the music file: it needs Windows Media Player or RealPlayer.

## For information

- Judaism, Christianity and Islam are monotheistic religions: they believe that there is only one God. Jews and Muslims place much importance on the oneness and unity of God. Although Christians also believe in the oneness of God this is sometimes misunderstood, because Christians believe that the one God is triune (the Holy Trinity): God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. For Christians this is not a denial of monotheism but expresses the profundity of the nature of God.
- 'God' is such a complex idea that if we ask what God is like we will probably hear something different from each person. Hundreds of different images seek to explain the nature of God, who he really is, what he is like and what kind of qualities he possesses. Is the truth in none of these, or all of them taken together? Are some images of God incompatible with others?
- Christianity and Judaism share some of the same personal images of God, but Islam rejects this kind of personification of God as wrong. Instead Muslims concentrate on Allah's attributes.
- Muslims believe in the Oneness of God – Tawhid – that there is only one God and that he is one being. Muslims believe that God is different from anything the human mind can think of or imagine. They believe we should try to understand the attributes of God that do not require us to make any mental pictures of him.

## Ideas for adapting this work

To include more 'learning from religion', download Gloria Gaynor's song 'I am what I am'. Play it as pupils enter the classroom. Consider: What am I like? In groups, pupils write the name of each person in their group (including themselves) on a piece of paper. They then write as many *positive* comments as they can about each person. Give them about two minutes per person. Each person in turn hears the comments about them from everyone. The pupil concerned writes out 'I am...' and then copies out the comments about themselves. Discussion can follow if they did not think anyone had seen them the way they saw themselves.

## What's in a name?

### Activity

Take the 24 names of Allah given below and cut them into individual cards. In fours, turn them over one at a time; what information does each card give you about the Muslim understanding of Allah? Is there anything surprising about each one? If you were introducing the Muslim understanding of Allah to a class of small children – say those half your age – which six names would you choose to start with? Why?

### Choose three of the names:

The one you think best sums up what God is like

The one you find hardest to understand

The one you think is most surprising or unusual

Write these up with your reasons for choosing them.

<i>Al-Fattah</i> The Opener	<i>Al-Allm</i> The Knower of All	<i>As-Salam</i> The Source of Peace
<i>Al-Muhaymin</i> The Guardian	<i>Al-Ghaffar</i> The Forgiving	<i>As-Sami</i> The Hearer of All
<i>Al-Karim</i> The Generous	<i>Al-h Haqq</i> The Truth	<i>Al-Qadir</i> The All Powerful
<i>As-Sabur</i> The Patient One	<i>Al-Hadi</i> The Guide	<i>An-Nur</i> The Light
<i>Al-Mani</i> The Preventer of Harm	<i>Al-Wali</i> The Protecting Friend	<i>Al-Barr</i> The Doer of Good
<i>Al-Awwal</i> The First	<i>Al-Mumit</i> The Taker of Life	<i>Al-Akhir</i> The Last
<i>Al-Matin</i> The Forceful One	<i>Al-Mu'akkhir</i> The Delayer	<i>Ad-Darr</i> The Creator of the Harmful
<i>Al-Ahad</i> The One	<i>Al-Wajid</i> The Finder	<i>Al-Muqit</i> The Nourisher