4.6 Religion, Science and Ideology as Competing Belief Systems: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write at least three full-sentence answers for the three extended questions (Q7, Q11, Q16). Use sociological terms where relevant. Spend about 30 minutes in total.

1 Analyse two ways in which science can be seen as a belief system similar to religion.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 Outline and explain two ways political ideology can function like religion as a belief system, naming at least one relevant sociological perspective.

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 Define what sociologists mean by a 'paradigm' in the context of Thomas Kuhn's account of science as a belief system.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Identify and explain one way Horton distinguishes between open and closed belief systems when comparing science and religion.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.6 Religion, Science and Ideology as Competing Belief Systems: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 1 Simple, limited analysis identifying basic similarities with little or no sociological explanation or examples. **1-3**

Level 2 Some analysis of two similarities with basic use of sociological ideas, but development is limited or one similarity is stronger than the other. **4-6**

Level 3 Clear analysis of two similarities with relevant sociological ideas and some evidence or example, showing awareness of nuance or limits. **7-9**

Level 4 Detailed, well-developed analysis of two similarities, using Popper, Kuhn, Horton and other relevant ideas, with good examples and consideration of counter-arguments or limits. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Similarity 1: both can create strong communities with shared commitments and rituals, for example scientific conferences and peer review compared with religious worship; reference to Durkheimian function of social cohesion as relevant background if used cautiously
- Similarity 2: both rely on core beliefs or assumptions that guide practice, e.g. Kuhn's paradigms create presuppositions in science similar to doctrines in religion
- Use of Popper: science claims to be open via falsifiability but in practice some scientific routines resist falsification, making it appear faith-like to outsiders
- Use of Horton: closed characteristics can appear in scientific communities, for example protection of core theories until anomalies force change; thus science can show closed system features similar to religion
- Social processes: authority and social hierarchy shape what counts as legitimate knowledge in both systems, for example senior scientists or religious leaders
- Counter-arguments: stress the genuine methodological differences, such as empirical testing, institutional mechanisms for criticism and self-correction in science; Kuhn's paradigm shifts show scientific change unlike religious revelation
- Examples: historical episodes such as resistance to plate tectonics or to early heliocentric ideas as cases where science behaved like a belief system before eventual shift
- Balance and evaluation: students should weigh similarities against real differences and conclude with a supported judgement

Question 2

identifies way one, e.g. ideology can provide totalising moral frameworks and sacred symbols **B1**

explains way one with example, e.g. nationalism uses flags, ceremonies and myths similar to religious rituals **B1**

identifies relevant perspective, e.g. functionalist view that ideology integrates society or Marxist view that ideology legitimises power **B1**

identifies way two, e.g. ideology can demand unquestioning loyalty and suppress dissent like religion **B1**

explains way two with example and perspective, e.g. fascist regimes created cults of leadership and used propaganda to enforce belief, a point emphasised by Marxist critiques of false consciousness **B1**

additional development linking example to perspective, e.g. how ideology fulfils social needs or maintains class domination **B1**

Answer: Political ideology can act like religion by providing totalising moral frameworks and sacred symbols, for example nationalism uses flags and ceremonies similar to religious rituals, a point functionalists note about social integration or Marxists use to show legitimisation. It can also demand unquestioning loyalty and suppress dissent, for example fascist cults of leadership enforced by propaganda, which Marxists analyse as producing false consciousness that maintains class power.

Question 3

identifies a paradigm as a shared set of theories, methods and assumptions used by a scientific community (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. it guides what counts as valid questions and acceptable answers within a field **B1**

Answer: A paradigm is a shared set of theories, methods and assumptions used by a scientific community; it guides what counts as valid questions and acceptable answers within that field.

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Question 4

identifies a qualified difference, e.g. Horton contrasts science as an open system with many religious belief systems as closed	**B1**
explains what open means, e.g. open systems allow criticism and testing of beliefs	**B1**
explains what closed means, e.g. closed systems defend core beliefs from disproof	**B1**
links the distinction to comparing science and many religious belief systems, e.g. science changes in response to evidence while closed religious systems protect core beliefs from contradictory evidence	**B1**

Answer: Horton contrasts science as an open belief system with many religious belief systems as closed: open systems allow beliefs to be criticised and tested, while closed systems defend core beliefs from disproof. Thus science changes in response to evidence, whereas closed religious systems protect core beliefs from contradictory evidence; this does not describe every religious belief system.

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