

The Religion of Ordinary Life (Parts 1-3)

INTRODUCTION

Is it possible / desirable to have a religion that does away with all 'metaphysical' beliefs? No 'God', no 'life after death', no 'soul' or rebirth/reincarnation'?

Explain that one modern (or post-modern) philosopher who has been promoting this view is Don Cupitt.

Download this information from: www.doncupitt.com/ordinary-life and copy/show students part 1 on 'Life'.

Explain that 'post-metaphysical', can mean different things and is a contested term, but for the purposes of investigation we might say that it refers to dimensions of existence and being that go beyond the purely physical, and may deal with questions such as whether the universe has an ultimate purpose, whether there is a life after death, whether there is a God or ultimate creator, and so on.

ACTIVITY

Ask the students to respond to such questions as:

- *Don Cupitt says that 'life is everything' and 'life is all there is': is he right, do you think? What **more** might there be?*
- *Does there have to be a final 'Truth' to the way things are?*
- *Cupitt says 'Life is God': is that a good enough definition? What **more** might God be?*
- *is there any role left for religion if this is a 'post-metaphysical' world?*

Point out that Cupitt (Point 6) quotes John's gospel, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1.1). The passage continues, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made." Ask students to consider that there is poetic wisdom in these verses, and ask them to comment as such questions as:

- *how far do you think Don Cupitt's interpretation of the verses is a helpful one for people today?*
- *in what sense might language (in its broadest sense) be responsible for the way the world is?*

Show students Parts 2 and 3 of Cupitt's 'The Religion of Ordinary

Life'. Provide some reading and reflection time and ask students to comment on anything they find puzzling, interesting or contentious.

After some time exchanging views, get some feedback from the groups and encourage an exchange of views and ideas.

In particular bring out their thinking on such ideas as:

- *what might the consequences be of believing that human beings have no 'soul'?*
- *if there is no ultimate 'justice' in the after-life, what are the consequences for this life?*
- *why should 'love' be esteemed most highly of all values?*
- *could some conflicts be resolved if people gave up on the idea of possessing a fixed 'identity'?*
- *if people believe that their life is 'all they have and all they'll ever have', how might that affect their attitudes and behaviour?*

Play 'The Fear' by Lily Allen [warning – contains explicit lyrics – see, e.g: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/lilyallen/thefear.html>] and ask students to consider such questions as:

- *what are the lyrics saying about life?*
- *why are a couple of swear-words used?*
- *what are the cleverest parts of the lyrics?*
- *is there a message here about society / social attitudes?*
- *what is 'The Fear'?*
- *if people don't know 'what's right and what's real' will they invariably behave selfishly and irresponsibly?*