1.2 Academic and devotional approaches

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

KEY WORDS academic approach • devotional approach • insider • outsider • methodological agnosticism • phenomenology

Objective

Learn the difference between the **academic** study of religion and **devotional** writing, the **insider/outsider** / problem, and the main academic **methods** (historical, textual, sociological, anthropological, phenomenological).

You must be able to:

- distinguish academic and devotional approaches
- explain the insider/outsider problem
- name five academic methods and what each studies
- explain methodological agnosticism (bracketing)
- classify sources by approach

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ Academic and devotional

	academic	**devotional**
aim	describe, compare and explain	deepen faith or practice
question	"What do adherents believe and why?"	"What should I believe and do?"
example	a scholar's study of a festival	a sermon, a prayer book

Methodological agnosticism (bracketing; from phenomenology): the scholar sets aside the question of whether a religion's claims are true, in order to describe it fairly.

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Insider and outsider

Insiders know the tradition from within: language, feeling, practice. **Outsiders** may see patterns insiders take for granted. Each can be biased: insiders toward their own branch; outsiders toward their own culture's categories. Kim Knott described a range of positions from complete participant to complete observer.

Methods

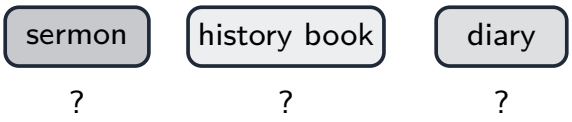
method	studies
historical	how a tradition developed over time
textual	sacred texts and their meanings
sociological	religion in groups and society (numbers, trends)
anthropological	lived religion through fieldwork
phenomenological	religious experience as adherents describe it

Worked classification. A temple's festival leaflet is devotional and primary; a survey of temple attendance by a university is academic, sociological and secondary.

2 Practice

2.1 Distinguish an **academic** from a **devotional** approach to religion. [2]

2.2 Classify each source as academic or devotional, and primary or secondary: (a) a mosque's Friday sermon; (b) a historian's book on the Reformation; (c) a pilgrim's diary of the Hajj. [3]



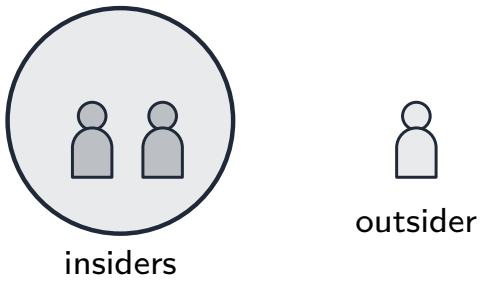
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2.3 Explain **methodological agnosticism**, and **one** advantage and **one** criticism of it. [4]

2.4 Explain the **insider/outsider** problem, and how a researcher can reduce bias from each position. [6]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(Preparation essay.)* "Only an insider can truly understand a religion." Discuss. [15]



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