

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4A *Topic II Perceptions of Ultimate Reality*

Candidate Exemplar Work

- Candidate A



Unit RST4A *Topic II Perceptions of Ultimate Reality*

Example of Candidate's Work on Specimen Questions

- 4 (a) Examine the nature of experiences of God / Ultimate Reality. (45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Many people refer to experiences of God as religious experiences and so I am going to look at these as my examination. There are different types of religious experience, ranging from mystical and conversion to revelation and prayer. All of these have a clear idea that God is involved in some way as are human beings.

Some scholars have helped to explain what the nature is of these religious experiences. William James has written about mystical experiences and he has said that there are four aspects to a mystical experience. The first is the experience will be ineffable, by this James meant that it would not be possible to describe the experience using ordinary words and language. Secondly he wrote about the experience being noetic and by this he meant that the person who had the experience would gain some special knowledge which could not be obtained in any other way, then he writes about transiency and he said that this was the fact that the mystical experience would in itself be very short but that it would have seemed and have much longer term effects. Finally James writes about the mystical experience being passive and here is says that the person who has the mystical experience will feel that they are being controlled by something outside themselves, beyond them.

I will now turn to conversion and Rambo and Farhadian write about what happens for a conversion to take place. They say that there are 7 elements.

1. Crisis by this they mean that a person has some sort of person crisis in their life, perhaps a death.
2. Quest the person being converted will have a personal reason for wanting to convert it might be to become a member of a particular society.
3. Encounter the person either meets God or someone who seems to represent God either an angel or another humans being with a message.
4. Context, the person converting will live in a particular type of environment and this will effect the conversion you cannot convert to a religion you have never heard of.
5. Interaction the convert must have interacted with other religious people and probably will know people of the faith they convert to.
6. Commitment the person who converts should be able to show commitment to their new religion or their new approach to life.
7. Consequences, there should be some obvious consequences to the life of the person who has converted, they adopted new ways of living, they follow the teachings and the practices of the religion they have converted to.

Other scholars do not write about specific religious experiences rather they refer to religious experiences in general, Otto says that it will be a numinous experience whereas, Stace says that there will be a number of elements to the religious experience like paradox, vision, blessedness. Most of them suggest that there will an encounter with God which will be personal, some refer to corporal, imaginative and intellectual experiences, but some also suggest that there can be experiences which involve large numbers of people like the Toronto Blessing.

Commentary

AO1 (45 marks)

The introductory paragraph is a good start where the candidate sets down that they will examine the nature of experiences of God by considering religious experience. Of course a very different approach could be adopted, for example a careful study of particular religions' scripture. Whilst the material on James is accurate the candidate has not made any attempt to apply this to the question and thus the material appears to be simply presented as something learned. One approach might have been to suggest that this is about characteristics of religious experience which in turn could have led to some examination of characteristics associated with experiencing God. The next section again presents Rambo and Farhadian commenting upon conversion, but once again there is no attempt to apply this to the question. Once again by considering process the candidate could have examined such an idea. In this case there was no need to provide all 7 stages, rather examples would have been adequate. The final paragraph has some points which would have been significant had they been developed, but this has not happened and there is little more than a few phrases. Because much has been undeveloped the answer is very brief.

This would probably be awarded top of level 3 or bottom of level 4.

- (b) **'Talking about God / Ultimate reality is meaningful only in a religious context. There is no value in talking about God / Ultimate reality to outsiders.'**

Evaluate this claim.

(30 marks)

AO2

Candidate Response

Most religions use technical language as part of the religion, Christianity speaks about eucharist and baptism, Islam speaks about Hajj and Jihad, Buddhism refers to nibbana and anicca. These words cannot be understood without studying the religion or becoming a member of the religion. Not all religions have any idea of God and Buddhism says that there is no such thing.

The majority of people today do not believe that there is a such a being as God, they think that the idea is silly, how can there be someone who lives forever, how can there be someone who controls what happens to people. Science has proved that there cannot be a God, we know that the world was not created in 6 days as we know that the worlds has evolved and that Darwin proved that there cannot be a God. We know that sciences has show that there are not things like religious experiences because that have been able to give people drugs and electrical shocks which have created that same effect as a supposed religious experience.

It is for these reasons that there is no point religious people talking to non religious people because they know that what they are being told is not true as Professor Hawkins says there should be more talk about not having a God in the world today. People should be punished for trying to brain wash their children into believing that there can a such a thing as God.

Commentary

AO2 (30 marks)

Whilst the candidate provides some examples of technical religious language in each case this is not language used to speak about God rather language used to describe practices. The remainder of the answer is very brief making a single point that people do not believe there can be such a thing as God and thus there can be little point in talking about God to non-believers. Generally the answer is rather naïve and thus becomes inaccurate in a number of places. Given the earlier material one would certainly have expected the candidate to have dealt with the issue of conversion, which would have allowed the response to be developed beyond the present limited approach.

Probably bottom of level 3.