

Examiners' Report
January 2012

GCE Religious Studies 6RS02 1B

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Introduction

This unit provides for a balance of teacher-directed and more independent student enquiry. This 'Investigations' unit offers the opportunity to undertake individual research into a topic of particular interest to the candidates. This is the reason why each question includes the expression, "with reference to the topic you have investigated". The ability to select and manage individual research material to fit into the demands of the question is an important discriminator in terms of assessment.

It is for this reason that the mark scheme for this unit is a generic one. There are no indicative mark schemes per question given the fact that there are so many legitimate ways of answering questions based on independent research.

The two assessment objectives should permeate this whole process. Candidates should determine whether there is sufficient material to access a variety of appropriate sources (AO1) and to evaluate alternative views (AO2). Candidates may monitor their progress with reference to the criteria in the level descriptors across both AO1 and AO2. The assessment criteria are always mentioned in each question. Typically this is achieved with the trigger words, 'examine' for AO1 and 'comment on' for AO2. The assessment of the candidates work is based on the application of these objectives.

Some candidates performed well on this unit. It was clear that some candidates had selected topics of genuine interest to them. There was evidence of substantial background reading which was used effectively in answers. Candidates presented well-structured responses based on the question and were able to use their knowledge to address the focus of the question. A feature of high quality answers was the ability to relate to the question throughout the answer. Candidates performed well across both assessment objectives with detailed content and cogent argument.

Some candidates did not select their material in accordance with the specific question. Some candidates could have adapted their same material so as to use it more effectively to address the question. In some cases the question was only briefly mentioned and in others there was limited reference to the question in the final few sentences. Some responses at the lower levels drew on sources that were below the standard required at GCE level. These tended to be descriptive and more narrative rather than analytical. Some responses at the lower levels were short and lacked elaboration and the substantiation necessary at this level.

Some centres chose to concentrate on the same topic for a number of candidates. This was useful when backed up with relevant sources, whereby candidates could develop their own slant and specialism on their selected topics. Occasionally, some responses became formulaic without targeted attention to the demands of the specific question. A key aim of this unit is to involve candidates as active participants in order to provide possibilities for open-ended enquiry and independent learning.

It is essential that candidates are entered for the area of investigation which is the best fit for the question on the paper. Candidates were not penalised if a cross was placed in a box that did not match the response.

Question 1

This was generally a well answered question and good answers demonstrated high levels of informed and thoughtful scholarship. Some responses successfully connected standard arguments about religious experience with the idea of self-knowledge and/or God. Some tended to present narrative accounts of religious experience without the appropriate analysis and debate.

There were a range of responses with some addressing the question through the use of well established philosophical arguments (eg James, Otto Swinburne, Hick). Others showed an excellent understanding of Eastern scholars, and there were some very impressive scripts which made comparisons and contrasts between Eastern and Western thinking. Some scripts explored modern cognitive psychology.

This is the first part of the answer. The candidate gives a context to some key issues in this topic.

How is it possible to tell the difference between talking to God in a dream, and dreaming about talking to God? This is a question that English philosopher, Thomas Hobbs, brought forward and is a question many people ask when discussing religious Experience. From the ~~question~~ ^{claim} though, what do religious experiences show us about ourselves and ~~how~~ do they affect us? Well this is a very personal question as it will be different for everybody. When ~~dealing~~ ^{categorizing} thinking about ~~categories~~ people's ~~opinion~~ opinions on religious experiences we find there are two main views; the Subjectivist Theist and the Objectivist Theist. The first I shall examine is the Objectivist Theist, this is the more traditional view that God causes the experience in order to help/guide us in some way. When ~~referring~~ ^{referring} back to the ^{original} ~~claim~~ the objectivist Theist could say that religious experiences show us a lot about

ourselves and the nature of God, as an experience can guide people through difficult

times ~~and~~ showing both the kindness of God and the need in humans for help and faith.

However this view has problems, if God is ~~an~~ an object of an experience then does that not mean there is a finite being, an idea that goes against the ^{God} view of classical theism. ~~It~~ In addition there is no empirical evidence of God causing the experience so how do we know ~~the~~ assume this?

An alternative view to this is the Subjectivist thesis, this view states that it is not the experience itself which is important but the effect the experience has on the individual. When looking at the claim in the question the Subjectivist would say experiences do show us about God but more so show us more about ourselves and how we should continue in our lives. A problem with this idea is that ~~if it is not important to consider who is causing the idea that God is causing the experience it is not the point of such ideas that not mean there is no need for God and that it could be simply the mind causing the experience in order to make sense of the world.~~

In development to the idea of the mind causing the

experience Sigmund Freud said that religion is just a security blanket' that provides people with comfort. He went on to say that by 'proving' the existence of God by a Religious Experience is simply inconceivable. Freud thought that these 'experiences' were caused due to the 'fear & admiration' people felt towards God and so people create these ideas which allow them to cope with the world. Freud would say that religious experiences show us a lot about ourselves as they show the desperation in humans to not be alone.

In contrast to this William James stated that 'since experience is the final judge of truth; God being the object of the experience should be taken as factually true'. In relation to the original question James would agree that without religious experiences we would not know ourselves or God as it allows us to contemplate life and reveals a lot about God and to many provides evidence for his existence.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate examines and considers two interpretations related to this topic, namely objective compared to subjective stances.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

It is sometimes useful to set up contrasting points of view within which various scholars are used to exemplify various positions.

This is in the middle of an answer and at this stage the candidate examines the view that religious experience provides a way of 'knowing God'.

as evidence for the existence of God - the Hard and the Soft position. Terence Penelhum - (hard) - religious experiences would be valid evidence - if there were no other explanations available to account for them - but there are! John Hick - (soft) - maintains that if a rational person has ^{powerful} experience of God then they are entitled to make the claim that God exists, on the same basis as anyone claiming through experience that the physical world exists. (e.g. you could ask such a person how do you know the world exists?) Richard Swinburne supports this point of view. He explains that to argue convincingly that religious experience is direct proof for the existence of God then it must be made clear why God should reveal himself and if he does why should people believe accounts of such experiences? People who do not view religious experience as evidence for the existence of God would clearly fully reject the claim that such experiences are necessary to know ourselves.

Swinburne argued that God has a reason to make himself known through authentic revelation, to enable humanity to bring about the good and to intervene personally in the lives of individuals out of his love for them: "an omnipotent and perfectly good creator would seek to interact with his children, in particular human persons capable of knowing him." He does not however claim that this interaction is necessary for creatures to know him and does not make the claim that God essentially has to do this - he would only want to do it out of love? Surely if this was necessary for humans to know God and themselves, then an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent God would make religious experience an automatic process in life? - Although some would argue that the life is the religious experience he is allowing us to ~~be~~ undergo.

Swinburne based his opinion on the work of Alister Hardy and David Hay, that as many millions of people have had an experience of what seems to them to be God, then it is a basic principle of rationality that we should believe them. The principle of credulity ~~is~~ states that: unless there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary then we should believe that things are as they seem to be. Religious experiences are veridical (Vardy). ~~The principle of testimony~~ → Swinburne also argued for the principle of testimony. We cannot work on the basis that we constantly doubt people's accounts of religious experience any more than we doubt basic facts about the world that we have not directly experienced ourselves. As a result, we should believe the testimony of people who have had religious experiences. Swinburne stated that "in the absence of special considerations, ~~the~~ ~~circumstances~~ ~~of~~ ~~these~~ experience of others are probably how they report them." Swinburne identified three types of evidence that give grounds that an experience may not have ~~been~~ been how they reported it. The circumstances surrounding the individual ~~may~~ render their perception unreliable (e.g. they have taken drugs). We have particular evidence that things are not how they are reported (e.g. they were not in the place they claimed to be) or there is evidence that the experience was not caused by God (e.g. the person suffers from mental illness). However Swinburne rejected these factors claiming that most religious experiences do not take place in such circumstances.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate puts forward two positions about religious experience in terms of knowledge of God and presents a detailed analysis of the views of Swinburne.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

There may be times within an essay that a candidate examines in detail the ideas and views of an individual scholar, especially one who has made a significant contribution. This is a good example of an analysis of Swinburne.

Question 2

Some candidates seemed well prepared for this topic and responses demonstrated a sound understanding of a wide range of scholars with debates throughout their answers. Some presented three models (hard materialism, soft materialism and dualism) as a standard response to the question. The issues connected with Near Death Experiences were raised by many students but often in a rather unscholarly way. The discussions are perfectly valid, but candidates should be aware of the need to outline and comment on these arguments with the same degree of rigour as they analyse more traditional philosophical arguments.

There were some strong responses to this question, where demanding philosophical contributors were discussed with authority.

This is the full extract of an answer on the mind body topic. The majority of answers range across a number of theories and scholars, and in a number instances to good effect.

Plato was a great philosopher through his work 'The Republic' came his analogy of 'the cave' or 'ignorance to education' through this he put forth the idea of immortality. He said by looking at human condition, do we see we are dual creatures. Plato was a dualist meaning he believed there ^(body and soul) was something besides the body 'the soul' a metaphysical element as well as natural 'body' that we are more than just a body. The soul predates the body and is on a higher level of existence than ourselves. Our true identity or personality lies within this and does not change. Humans are to care for the soul but usually let the pleasures of the body take over: eating, sleeping and sexual pleasures. Plato's case could be said to be found at the heart of the mind body debate, although inductive, Plato's words are revealing today as they were 2500 years ~~ago~~ ago.

Most people are satisfied with the explanation that what we see and touch is true reality. Plato highly disagreed. There is a true reality, according to his work one of perfection and

unchanging^{existence}. He said this is the difference in living in a state of 'becoming' and living in a state of 'being'. In Plato's dialogue 'Phaedrus' Socrates said that philosophy was a rehearsal for the ~~final~~ final liberation of the soul when people died. In Plato's work it is said that most likely Plato was trying to portray Socrates as the prisoner like the soul as a prisoner to the body, we too are prisoners to our mind. In Plato's analogy we are told to imagine prisoners deep inside a cave their bodies ^{chained} so that they can only see shadows of their own behind them as a fire there only separation from darkness and between them is a raised walkway controlled by the puppet men who today would be ~~the~~ Plato been able to comment would of said were the government or media blind us with materialism and shadows. Imagine each day a ~~imagery~~ ^{creating an} ~~shadow~~ ^{innocent} shadow plague to the prisoners. This is the only world they know. It consumes them and their beliefs that this is reality. Nothing more. But say one day a prisoner is released and forced to turn his head, and walk out the

scare exposed to the true world of form. As he sees the sun he is blinded by its intensity illustrating the colloquialism 'the truth hurts'. The prisoner has finally reached contentment, only to be haunted by his old habitation of darkness and fallacy. He sympathises with the other prisoners who are still in the darkness of what is really true. On return the prisoner tells them of the world outside. But they shun his words as if they were absurd, and so they kill the man who tries to disturb their conventional ideas ~~as to some~~ ^{so they can} live their life in ignorance as to some, ignorance is bliss.

Plato gave a name to one prisoner's journey 'a rough ascent'. He said only the people who will face this can truly know what it is to be a human and escape the shadows. But we don't look for this true world right? Wrong, every human ultimately looks for contentment or perfection in life. We take many routes: wealth, fame and love. But we are never happy, because we are not following our soul. We are letting the body be dominant only when we follow our soul to its 'home' then we will be content.

Furthermore, Plato laid arguments on the mind

and body debate to show there is more
to us, that we are dual creatures.

He gave a range of three ideas for the debate.

The first argument (language) he said he knew
we are part metaphysical from evidence
in how we talk about ourselves. For example
we say 'I have a cat' or 'I have a broken arm' when we
say this we are referring to a possession of
ours but then we say 'I have a body' if we
were just the physical then why do we not
say 'I am a body'. Also when we are confused
we would exclaim 'I am confused' but who
knows your confused, your body is just
muscle and tissue how could that be on a
higher level of understanding. Plato would
say in fact this is our soul. He compared
the soul to a charioteer in charge of two
horses: mind and body. The soul tries to guide
them in the same direction, many people
fall this and leave the body in control. This
leads us mistaken that we are just a body
and using our own opinions as true know-
ledge like the prisoners and their skill of guess-
work.

The second argument is for recollection,
Plato said all true knowledge is a priori or

innate within us. People claim to know 'beauty' or 'perfection' but how can they when there are no examples in the world. It is a universal quality we apply because in that object or person we are recollecting what is eternally good. But if we are just bodies, how would we know this? It must be the soul who has seen the ideal beauty who recognises it in this object. In Meno, Socrates questioned an uneducated slave on geometry. After a while of interrogation the boy was capable of remembering what he had forgotten through the trauma of child birth or 'the cave'. Socrates declared the boy was capable as he had already questioned it in his soul. This was evidence for Plato on the mind/body debate.

The third argument was for the notion of good we constantly use the terms: good, beautiful or perfection. But how do these terms not become redundant? We would say that a bunch of flowers are good beautiful or later a baby is beautiful so why do these terms not have a fixed meaning? It is because they beyond the quality of absolute goodness. Bertrand Russell used the illustration of a cat, he asked what is a 'cat'? There are many forms of a cat but like those terms there is no ultimate cat that can be found.

in this world. Cats become cats when they take part in cat-like behaviour or "catness". In the world of forms, there is the ideal cat that is perfect and unchanging. The 'cats' that appear to us are only shadows of the true form and the soul recognizing this wishes to depart the ever-changing world and go to its immortal and ever-lasting perfect world. Thus concluding Plato's last argument for the soul.

~~Plato's~~^{case} ~~argument~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~only~~ ~~one~~ ~~is~~ ~~+~~ The mind and body debate is still taken about now as it was back then. In philosophy the better you use an illustration the better you can get your point across. So it becomes interesting when the media and film become involved in the mind/body debate. The Matrix holds Plato's case as its ingredients in its take on mind/body debate like the prisoner Neo is 'unplugged' or 'enchained' and is liberated by taking the pill. The 'robots' around him are not representing technology but the similar rigid thinking that is shared with the other prisoners in the cave who can only see 'Neo'. There are many quotes that illustrate Plato's case in The Matrix.

the most strongest by Moropnos 'Have you ever had a dream Neo, that you thought was real, what if you could not wake up how would you know which was a dream and which was the real world?' In this quote the dream world is referred to as the body or world of 'becoming' and the real world as the true reality. I find The Matrix a particularly interesting take on the philosophical mind-body debate giving it more of a ranged explanation.

In evaluation of Plato's work we have to first give him credibility that he has lasted 2500 years thus meaning the way he has interpreted the evidence (body) and drawn conclusions to the soul must mean that people see a link between their own lives and his work. He has left not only a imprint on the debate but on philosophy as a whole Norman Whitehead said 'all modern day philosophy are just foot notes to Plato.' Thus saying as aforementioned Plato can be seen in the heart of the debate. His main evidence for his work 'Language' is a universal quality that everyone understands. Another advantage is that

his parable works in a secular society with a world that is 80% religious meaning a parable that can be read universally is probably a factor of Plato's lasting effect. Answer, although a inductive argument it does not take a blind leap that is usually seen in other inductive arguments like the cosmological. We cannot deny Plato he has not got evidence.

But many would criticise his conclusion, and also his side of the debate. Empiricists would firstly say there is no evidence for this world of eternal forms if a astronomer was asked to look through his telescope it would not be located.

Also they would dismiss the argument of dualism as there is no evidence of this intrinsic substance. Thus the argument is dismissed by many scientific minds through the use of a x-ray on the body.

Gilbert Ryle was the biggest critic of Plato's work he said he manipulated language to credit his work. When we exclaim 'I'm confused' there is no soul it is just our minds finding a flaw in the data we are

Trying to interpret. This is just recognition of how complex we are.

He was definitely to be said found to be on the body side of the debate when he used his analogy of the university when critiquing Plato's 'category mistake'. He said if he was to show someone a university and all its buildings and activities and someone at the end of the tour still asked to see the university, wouldn't there be something wrong? Because Kyle said like the university, our bodies are made of many parts. Therefore there is no evidence from language to sustain Plato's argument.

Another criticism comes from Plato's declaration that 'the true identity of a person lies within the soul' this is arguable and it is proven that drugs affect a person's personality therefore are we nothing more than chemically complex creatures?

In conclusion, although Plato's work receives hard criticisms on his evidence and conclusions, Plato's work must have some place in the mind-body debate his parable and arguments reach to us so much as perhaps our 'soul' is negotiating

~~what~~ truth in his work and gives a
good explanation to ~~is~~ what it is
to be a human and theory of the mind
and the body and if we are dual creatures.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate focuses on the ideas of Plato and in this respect it is an in-depth study of one famous contributor. It is a careful and informed analysis, displaying the ability to draw attention to key significant points. The candidate highlights key issues about dualism and the debates that this raises. The overall title of this topic area is 'Contrasting standpoints on the relationship between mind and body'. This candidate shows that this contrast can be achieved with a concentrated focus on the views of one major philosopher supported by a range of debating points.

Question 3

The responses included discussions of a wide range of scholars. Answers in the upper levels do more than simply write as much as they know about a particular figure and in doing so they do not ignore (or treat superficially) the issue about their essential insight into religion and/or God.

Good answers were aware of the task at hand and there were some very probing attempts to assess the view that the selected philosopher(s) provided an essential insight into religion and/or God. A few very good responses considered objections and alternative viewpoints in a careful and systematic way.

A discussion of Existentialism and particularly Kierkegaard has become a very popular topic. There has been an increasing number of candidates writing about Greek philosophy, focusing particularly on Plato and Aristotle.

This is the first part of a candidate's answer focusing on existentialism.

Kierkegaard and Sartre's existentialism provides a valuable insight into religion and God. Kierkegaard thought up the idea of existentialism in reaction to William Hegel's world system. This was the idea that everything could be solved through reason because "the real is rational + the rational is real". Sartre later developed Kierkegaard's existentialism as a reaction to the conventional bourgeois society.

Key to understanding existentialism is the notion of defining ones self. This is the idea that a person's existence precedes their essence unlike a paper-knife, where its essence precedes existence because it has a designer. Due to this we are free to do what we like.*

This idea freedom comes from Abandonment. Kierkegaard explains that this when you call out to God and ~~he~~ he remains silent. Sartre explains by quoting Dostoyevski in saying "if God does not exist then everything is permitted". This means that there are no values a priori, so we are free to make our own rules and morals. The consequences of this is shown through ~~Antoine~~ ^{Antoine} Reguierin in Sartre's book Nausea. He realises whilst sitting in a coffee shop watching people "eating and drinking to preserve ^{precious} dear existence... that there is no reason what so ever for living".

This idea of Abandonment is key to getting ~~an~~ ^{an} essential insight into religion and God because it links into anguish. Kierkegaard explains that anguish is the "dizziness of freedom" as we can do whatever we like. Sartre further this ~~idea~~ idea by coming up with two definitions of anguish. In his book 'Being and Nothingness' he explains that anguish is when you are faced with your own freedom, whereas in Existentialism and

humanism. Anguish is felt when making a decision that commits the rest of mankind such as getting married. An example of this is shown in Albert Camus' 'The Fall' where a ~~middle class~~ ^{man considers} ~~man~~ ^{descending} from ~~his~~ ^{his} middle-class parasitic lifestyle into drunken debauchery.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate provides a brief context to existentialism. The analysis of Kierkegaard is aided by contrasting ideas and views from Sartre, drawing on various related sources such as Camus.

These are the concluding pages of an answer on the existentialist approaches of Sartre and Kierkegaard.

However there are groups who reject Sartre's philosophy of existentialism. Communists reject Sartre calling existentialism a bourgeois philosophy of despair when he criticised their belief of a blissful state for all men. Sartre responded that it was not a philosophy of despair but a realistic one. Humanists criticized Sartre of Human solidarity. Sartre responded that it is realistic and there is no such thing as human solidarity due to communication. Struggles as man is all alone when decision making and learning.

French Catholics criticized Sartre of "forgetting how an infant smiles". Sartre responded again that it is realistic and an infant does not actually truly smile.

However there are in fact Christian existentialists who believe in God, yet reject objective truths. These include Kierkegaard and Paul Tillich who have subjective truths and do not follow an organised path of religion; instead they believe in a God subjectively not knowing if they are correct or not or even if He exists. Bishop David Jenkins also believed.

people should forget old ideas of religion such as the resurrection, as this was not subjective to man. This is because there are so many different versions of the Bible all saying they are the word of God and so conflict.

Sartre adapted this idea ~~on that~~ and accepted it was authentic to believe in a God subjectively as it was individual and did not lead to *Mauvais Foi*.

Many Warnock also believed that it was impossible for people to be truly authentic due to the nature of society and believed people should make decisions on the basis of, "what here and now would be the least phoney

thing for me to do."

Existentialism provides an insight into the notion of God and practice of religion by rejecting both on the basis of subjective truths. This is because objective truths do not allow a person to have freedom, ~~however,~~ and therefore our actions of practice of religion are not authentic ~~needing~~ as a result of *Mauvais Foi*, bad faith.

People can only have authentic faith if they believe in God on a subjective level as this is personal

and authentic as it is true to themselves.

The same illusion of the paper knife shows purpose and that if there is no God, man has no purpose, only purpose he creates for himself.

The paper knife has purpose and meaning, yet people were created without either, and to believe otherwise lead to *Mauvais Foi*.

Sartre believed existence precedes essence and to be authentic people

must be free and have the choice to ~~act~~ make decisions alone.

Existentialism believes you are alone in your decision, you can only think about yourself and act on behalf of mankind. Existentialism states you must choose non-phoney decisions so it is not *Mauvais Foi*.



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The AO2 features of these pages display good practice. Level 4 of AO2 includes reference to a 'careful analysis of alternative views'. The candidate debates various criticisms of both Sartre and Kierkegaard and shows the variety of disputes regarding their contributions.

Paper Summary

Advice for candidates:

- Manage the material from the investigations to focus on the demands of the question
- Use appropriate sources
- Show an understanding of the topic
- Present a thoughtful analysis of the material
- Make effective use of evidence and argument
- Comment on alternative views
- Show a clearly expressed viewpoint.

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