

Examiners' Report
June 2016

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04 1A

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June 2016

Publications Code 6RS04_1A_1606_ER

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Introduction

There are two fundamental principles for examining this paper and these are based on the assessment objectives:

- One is that in AO1 it is essential to examine the text; noting that there are various ways of achieving this.
- Two is that in AO2 it is essential to answer the full demands of this evaluative objective. This includes: 'Do you agree with the idea(s); justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience'.

At Standardisation meetings examiners considered three important documents for assessment and marking. First, the General Marking Guidance document sets out the policy of positive marking. Secondly, the Generic Mark Scheme divides each level across both AO1 and AO2 into 3 sublevels and this is helpful to achieve precise marking. Finally, the indicative mark scheme is not intended to be prescriptive but to indicate possible legitimate ways of answering a question. The teams of examiners, by adopting these policies, have a broad and detailed understanding of the assessment process.

Over the years, candidates have produced excellent and outstanding answers and this continued to be the case.

Question 1

Good practice re AO1:

- Candidates showed evidence of a systematic focus on the passage; noting that this may be achieved via a variety of methods.
- Engagement with the philosophical issues; including accurate analysis with technical detail of logical positivism in relation to atheism and agnosticism.
- These candidates carefully explained Ayer's philosophy, sometimes linking this to early Wittgenstein.
- Some explored atheism to highlight Ayer's criticisms of atheism and agnosticism.
- Candidates presented synoptic links to the source as a whole, to related anthologies and to links in other units such as 6RS03.

There was wide-ranging scholarship that was used to unpack key issues in verification and falsification debates. Some were able to locate Ayer within a history of ideas/philosophy. Candidates included three or four of the following:

- Aquinas
- Donovan
- Flew
- Hare
- Hull
- Hume
- Kant
- Popper
- Ricoeur
- Westphal
- Wittgenstein.
- Past reports have pointed out the potential problems of conflating AO1 with AO2 that results in a tendency to present partial answers to AO2. This year a few candidates presented holistic answers which in fact succeeded and there is an example below. This method is in a minority.

Good practice in AO2:

- The best answers in part (b) struck a balance between insightful personal engagement with a critical analysis of the implications for understanding religion and human experience.
- There were some excellent answers with sound arguments and thoughtful discussions based on a range of scholarship. This included some of those listed above and also e.g.

Bultmann

Otto,

Swinburne

Tillich.

Some approached this passage and Ayer in particular from the perspective of critiques of religion. For example, candidates considered the contributions of Dawkins, Freud and Marx. In relation to implications, candidates explored the underlying epistemology and related these issues back to debates about materialism and idealism and to science and religion.

- Some developed their implications material by using a discussion about ethical language with contributors such as Braithwaite and Randall.

Areas for improvement for AO1:

- A comparatively small number disregarded the passage, making no reference to it. Some had developed an understanding of Ayer but were not capable of applying this knowledge to the passage under consideration. An examination of the passage is essential, though there are various different methods of achieving this. However, to ignore the passage is very poor practice.
- Some focused on religious experience at the expense of religious language. In effect, some answers were based upon Donovan rather than Ayer. Clearly issues about religious experience could have a place in a discussion of Ayer but this needed to be from within the context of a study of Ayer.
- Some presented a mere comprehension of the passage with little, if any, analysis or comments on significant points.
- There was some confusion about a precise understanding of logical positivism and language games.
- Some mentioned a few scholars but at this level there was limited understanding of their contributions.

Areas for improvements for AO2:

- Some answers did little more than express an opinion, making sweeping claims, without supporting justifications with the ideas of scholars.
- More attention could have been given to alternative views of a topic and this is one of the criteria for Level 4
- Some candidates did not engage in a critical analysis of positions other than Ayer.
- There was a limited ability to comprehend the implications for religion and human experience.

There are four scripts below all of which received full marks:-

the first one was well-organised;

the second had a good balance between AO1 and AO2;

the third was good in terms of synoptic links;

the final one showed how an integration of AO1 together with AO2 could work well with careful planning.

(c) A.J. Ayer's 'God-talk is evidently nonsense' utilizes his reasons for the abolition of religion or any practices which acknowledge the existence or possibility of an existing ~~but~~ divine being, namely God. Ayer's critique on religion is derived from his position in the Vienna circle, a group of logical positivists who held a 'verifiability' principle in mind. Likewise, Ayer was significantly influenced by David Hume's "Fork" (emphasis on importance of empirical and empirical events) as well as Wittgenstein's "Picture Theory." Ultimately, these influences have led to Ayer's formulation of a verification principle which requires on the score of this fact and which means that for any assertion to be taken seriously it must be able to be scientifically or physically verified. Assertions claiming any \in μ i claims, for instance.

Finally, Ayer states in this passage that "religious assertions" possess no "literal significance." The religious assertions that Ayer perhaps is referring to are those of religious believers who assert that have crucial religious experiences, which act as a proof for the existence of God. For instance, scholar William James had noted that one religious experience would be taken into account as serious evidence - not as the "evidence" of it. Persecution of Quakers in 1572, following Quakers' encounter with a being played while using and in connection as witnesses, 700 of Quakers declared that they had entered into a "spiritual marriage" with Jesus Christ. Therefore, Ayer's dismissal of

any and all religious assertions for the sake of his argument. Ayer agrees that any experience which can't "be demonstrably proven" by science or physical evidence supports a reference to the spirit for the existence of God. Thus, his argument is that any such experiences as faith and should not can be spoken of because they are "irrevocable."

Secondly, Ayer agrees in this passage that "all utterances about the nature of God are revealed." This proposal, understandably, agrees that any religious text used will to depict the attributes of God (such as the Bible's creation that God possesses the attributes of eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent). The dismissal of claims of the nature of God have diverged the essential / prayer for the existence of God and as the ontological argument. The ontological argument, originating with St. Anselm in his 1072 prologues, defines God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" which therefore asserts that God's nature is one of "necessity." For those with creationism, an "irrevocable" because is stated in this passage, the proposition that God ever passes a nature is pointless because there is no way to exist to pass the nature. Thus, Ayer here is supported by Richard Swinburn who also stated that any claim "lacking a single piece of data for the real world" should be disregarded.

furthermore, Ayer argues that these nonrational assertions are "incompatible" with "familiar contentions" which have been faithfully and widely accepted by scientists, artists and religious believers. For instance, the rest of the text can be referred to as leading support to the idea that "proposals of God's presence in Earth which give knowledge of his nature or nonrational. This insistence of Ayer to proposals that God have challenges the teleological argument, particularly the demands of the aesthetic argument (Tennant) and the cosmological ontology (Kalam). Tennant argued in this way that the presence of "unnecessary and natural beauty" is evidence of God's creation and his existence in the universe of the world which science had found no other explanation for it. However, Ayer's criticism in this passage that these arguments are incompatible with ordinary understanding ~~and~~ diminishes their contribution to the proof for God. This is because we are able to observe these examples of evidence in daily life and to the non-believer, they are appreciated to their fullest capacity without the thought of God in them.

Thirdly, Ayer's sees a trouble in this passage that "it is only simple and concrete propositions which can be significantly contradicted." This relates to their overall dismissal of non-cognitive language, which expresses synthetic statements. Ayer's argument is that all religious language is meaningless, and the only kind of language used to challenge it is also meaningful because it is related to the subject. Inspired by Wittgenstein's

statement "language is only meaningful if, in principle, it is verifiable," Ayer now introduces his verification principle into his passage. Ayer says that for language to be meaningful, it must be supported by other, empirical or factual information. Relatedly to Lewis, "there are statements not reducible with other given statements which are true." Hence, the divine claims being made on the grounds that it is in itself a faith which lacks of satisfactory empirical evidence support. Therefore, any deity's claims, such as a divine, criticized against are automatically disproven because they are based on "weak verification principles."

Further, Ayer criticizes the agnostic in his passage on the basis that he does not rule out deistic faith's existence as "divine proposition." This genuine feeling of agnosticism was originally developed for the likes of Descartes who stated "I think, therefore I am." The ground of agnosticism is that an existence is acknowledged only by the acknowledgment of God's an existence, and Ayer thinks that if the agnostic is thinking seriously about the possibility of God's existence, then he is going as far as a renewed belief to provide and proceed. This relates to Paul Tillich's work in the field of religious symbols and myth. He writes of symbols and myth men that religion often lives and transcends both ideas and myths or objects rather than they are, factual evidence which the given religion is leading in. The proposed

that the syncretic scholars complete the possibility of God's existence has therefore derived from the description of God given to him to by other people or objects and is not a real being which could be verified - for example someone could agree that an intuition informs of that symbols are not on properly about God. Ultimately, symbols such as the crucifixion were in Christianity has reached that the resurrection of Jesus Christ actually happened - meaning it has given us for this to be purely gathered because there is something in the world to suggest that it did. Nevertheless, Dawkins could make a statue of his "flying spaghetti monster" and agree that the statue symbolizes that this being once existed. This, then has once again criticised the proposition of God's existence on the grounds that it has derived from "folklore" practices, as stated elsewhere in the text.

Finally, Ayer criticises the agnostic and the atheist in this passage because they believe that "we ought not to commit ourselves" to either total disbelief or total belief. Ayer regards that agnostics at a the ground that the idea God's existence has not been totally disproven, it has not been proven either and thus they allow for the possibility. However, Ayer's arg disallows for this leaving it the result of word games which are derived from possibility. For instance, if God is possible then religious beliefs are able to comprehend this ~~to~~ people to avoid their

an end. For example, St. Thomas Aquinas in his conduct agent set out that God is a necessary being, and that if he is necessary and is possible to exist, then he clearly does exist and is the "first cause, mover etc." of all in the world. By allowing for the possibility of a God's existence, he counters any theologically disconcerting that in his allowance for other "nonverbal" proofs to refer.

Ultimately, in this passage Aquinas has cultivated the hoped views of the synthetic regarding the ~~existence~~ existence or non-existence of God, which understandably offend Aquinas because of their allowance of further "God-talk." People have concluded by discussing God himself, Aquinas is strongly stating that any discussion about or contemplation of God is meaningless and unproductive because without physical or scientific "verification," religious beliefs are hopeless.

(b) There was cultivated by Aquinas which implicitly implies that religious beliefs also heavily imply upon human experience, in an external religious way. There is urgent demand of any or all 'God-talk' is offensive to many and the 2 degree with his external and internal sense.

Finally, 2 degree with Aquinas sense on the issue of God because his proposal to external and internal religious and external may be expressive and produced. For instance, religious experiences

events are allowed to exist in secular societies. Enjoyable festivals such as Christmas (which has denied for the Bible story of the birth of Jesus "I big go got no that all may jio to her"), Easter (which has denied for the Bible story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ), or baptism ceremonies which create connections in the family and parents, have all been originated in religious practice. Whilst some place a greater emphasis on religion than others, even those placing little to no emphasis could still be detrimental to society. This could be an entirely negative implication for religion because they could have no moral guidance for their beliefs, and it would have a negative impact on human experience because it could create a modern era where nobody would celebrate festivals or form connections with others such as grandparents, so for those these connections would be meaningless since they denied for religious practice.

Secondly, Asger's work suggests that 'God-talk is nonsense' abolishes the progress made by religions in secular debate since he stretched across the centuries. Work of forces religious scholars such as Asger to the problem of cultural suffering (his religion has promised hope & meaning during times of suffering and have this eternal human experience), or the work of atheist Richard Dawkins who called God "harmless" and as they united the atheist community and averaged scientific education inderdubitably, would all be treated

permitted and could no longer be repeated. This has
large implications for the religious belief because it means
that progress in progress and debate has been made for
the sake of progress, and to prevent further debate
could damage human experiences because it prevents social
and ethical which happens in order to better people's lives.
For instance religious debates over homosexuality which have
been conducted by attacks: but if the talk is non-violent
then the discussion would have more taken place.

Thirdly, Ayer's dismissal of all non-cognitive language
has large implications for our understanding of morality.
For some religious believers, morality and God exist. The
idea of a religion has, over the centuries, had a large
influence on the formation of laws or civil moral codes.
For instance, it has made things like slavery illegal to kill
another human being in the UK, and this can be traced back
to the ten commandments which include "for thy neighbor
and "thou shalt not kill." ~~therefore, Ayer's proposal~~
~~to dismiss~~ the negative implications of the removal / abolition
of religion is therefore that it could result in a
socially delayed law / justice / punishment system which
poses a threat to society, and the human experience of
feeling safe and having freedom to express individuality,
such as in Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism. If all non-
cognitive claims are meaningless, then so is morality because

skin to hand, it is not a tangible object which can be verified to the 'objective' requirements.

Further finally, Ayer's proposal that all personal feelings or experiences do not contribute to proving anything by inductively or deductively because it means they must accept that they have not experienced God's being of their believe, which is hurtful, but also because Ayer discriminates against religious beliefs' experiences because they need to be "psychologically examined." Furthermore, Ayer's proposal that feelings are meaningless does de-values emotions such as love, loyalty and trust which create the basic foundations on which human concerns are based upon. Thus, the negative implications of Ayer's ignorance and address towards feelings is that it would prevent individual expression. When this stance is adopted, society could become cold and almost "robotic" because everything is discarded would be removed or verifiable, science and technology. Any personal knowledge or autonomy would not be allowed to happen because what would be thinking and acting the one way.

In conclusion, A.J. Ayer's "God-talk is evidently nonsense" simply criticized the reasons why pray put forward for the existence of God by religious beliefs must be disregarded by doing this, Ayer also suggests that religion or any other practice which is neither created a priori and non-empirical

data is to be abolished, ~~which~~ which has more negative implications for both believers and non-believers in their human experience. In particular, Ayer's dismissal of subjectivism or personal thoughts has horrendous ramifications for development, brainwork or social evolution. 10. Ayer says that anything unverifiable cannot be discussed, many ideas or feelings could never be understood. The undercurrent of weakness in Ayer's text is that he is ignorant and arrogant rather than aware that his view is superior to the degree of rigidity of all other scholarly texts on the last issue. Whilst Ayer may desire to live in a society devoid of individualism or cultural diversity, most others do not and so his view has not been accepted and he implicates himself through the possible intelligence in his view.



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Examiner Comments

This first script is well-organised.

3) In this passage A.J. Ayer is expressing a anti-metaphysical view for the 'possibility' of the 'existence of a god'.

He begins by arguing the nature of the agnostic approach to the belief in God which ~~was~~ arose from T. J. Huxley who believe that there 'the existence of God is a possibility' and there is no reason to believe or disbelieve'. This thus represents a relative neutral approach to the belief for the existence of God.

T. J. Huxley further ~~of~~ argue that the burden of proof lies with religious believers to demonstrate the existence of God. However, even though there is an equal chance that God may or may not exist, for the atheist the 'least probable' explanation is that no God exists'. This passage lends philosophical support from Hume's Fork which argues that the only statements which are able to have epistemological status are those that are either analytic/synthetic statement, therefore as

Metaphysical / Theological statements fall into neither of those categories it is therefore meaningless and "non-sensical". Additionally, this view can be given further support from the logical positivists who argue that only natural science is able to provide statements with epistemological credibility as

metaphysical, ethical language is non-cognitive and therefore devoid of meaning and thus further endorse the view that it is 'least probable that no God exists' as such statements are able to ~~be~~ empirically tested

or observed via our senses. To which I put forward: the method of meaningfulness of a ~~proposition~~ proposition is the method of its verification.

^{The early} Ludwig Wittgenstein in his 'Tractatus philosophico-logico-philosophicus' ~~provides~~ supports / symphonises with the Vienna circle and adduced the philosophy: "That about which one cannot speak one passes over in silence".

A.J. Ayer himself lends support

to the logical positivist world view and argues that it is probable that 'no god exists' and such metaphysical/theological propositions are unable to be verified in principle or in practice and are therefore ipso facto meaningless. Sir Karl Popper adduced the hypothesis-deductive method ~~for~~ in his 'The philosophy of religion' and adduced that science works on the basis of providing theories about the world that are able to be tested and potentially falsified. Scientific knowledge works on the basis of conjectures and refutations as falsification is what clearly demarcates scientific ideas from pseudo-scientific/metaphysical ones. Theological/metaphysical ~~and~~ ~~a posteriori~~ ~~experiences~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~transcendent~~ ~~being~~ ~~being~~ are a language ~~to do~~ is impossible to falsify it is therefore ~~more~~ 'probable no god exists', and thus are devoid of meaning. Anthony Flew ~~also~~ further echoes the 'characteristic' of an 'atheist' and using his parable of the invisible

gardener and ~~the~~ argues that this parable is able to effectively show ~~the~~ how believers are constantly shifting the goal post and she claims that they make are so weakened down

that they are barely statements at all. For Flew, the gardener dies the death of a thousand qualifications as every time the gardener fails to be detected, the believer qualifies what they mean by their gardener and therefore leads Flew to criticise ~~the~~ the theological language on the grounds of its in falsifiability and therefore evidently provides evidence that it is 'probable that *no god exists*':

This passage can further be enlarged by a pro-Brightenment world view which holds that led to radical critiques of religion. Ludwig ~~the~~ Feuerbach in his 'The essence of Christianity' further argues that God-talk is 'non-sensical' and as religion can exist is essentially a projection of the human mind and ~~is~~ to nothing more when people

worship God, they are in fact worshipping their own human nature as God is nothing more than a social construction. ~~The~~ Durkheim, Freud and Marx were children of the Enlightenment and further lend philosophical support ~~but~~ for the fact that it is ~~very~~ "probable that no God exists" and argued that religion is able to be ~~even~~ explained in terms of psychological, sociological and ~~psycho~~ physiological terms ~~as the~~ ~~the~~ Durkheim believed that religion can be explained in purely sociological terms and should not be regarded as objectively ~~the~~ true. He believed that religion serves as a cohesive function and helps society to function with organic solidarity and thus concludes that ~~the~~ religion is not have any foundations resting on a transcendent/divine being. Freud further supports such philosophical skepticism and argues that religion is a ~~a~~ psychopathology and believes should be regarded as have a

a universal obsessional neurosis as it is an attempt to ~~for~~ create a comic father figure in this ~~long~~ lonely universe. Marx further builds on such philosophical thought and argues that what the forces that prevent such a classless, egalitarian utopia from coming into being is religion and is nothing more than an illusion that serves to ease the pain caused by capitalist exploitation and oppression. It is a series of false myths that justify and legitimise the subordination of the proletariat and the ~~the~~ dehumanisation and privilege of the bourgeoisie; and such scepticism is what led Friedrich Nietzsche to famously declare that "God is dead", and according to J.L. Mackay even by using Occam's razor we are able to assert that a naturalistic explanation is a far more economical hypothesis as opposed to a metaphysical one and can lead us to the conviction that

'There is 'no transcendent God' and such a statement should be regarded as 'actually true'.

b) I do not agree with the ideas expressed in this passage as we are ~~able~~ in fact ~~able~~ to do 'have a means of telling which ~~one~~ one of them is true' as we are able to assert that God is able to exist subjective within a paradigm. ~~as long~~ This famous theory of language games was established by the later early Wittgenstein who ~~was~~ and this hermeneutical shift led Wittgenstein to question the notion that science provides the most unique way of gaining knowledge about the world. In his book, 'Philosophical investigations' and began to realise that non-cognitive / non-scientific statements were just as intelligible as scientific cognitive ones and as long as it was understood that they were speaking their own language about the world. Therefore the theory of

Language games is able to radically question the enlightenment assumption that ~~empirical~~ empirical methods are to be accorded epistemological superiority over all other forms of knowing and this gives support for the belief in a 'transcendent Creed'. Each language game is distinct from one another and ~~can~~ statements made cannot be criticised on the grounds that it conflicts with the statements of another. For example, the story of Adam and Eve would not conflict with scientific theories about the origin of the world as ~~both~~ ^{as both} science and religion exist as one separate language game. ~~to~~ Wittgenstein further exemplifies this point using ~~the~~ ^{his} duck-rabbit image and showing that the subject and contextually determined nature of aspect seeing. Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory, further ~~allows us~~ gives support for the existence of a transcendent Creed. And even though 'agnosticism' is ruled out we are

able to assert that God does in fact exist. This meaningful way of demonstrating the existence of God can be further exemplified by the use of analogy, myth and symbol. Thomas Aquinas developed analogy as a non-cognitive attempt to ~~via~~ via-media to resolve the problems raised by univocal language - ~~with~~ where God is at risk of becoming anthropomorphism and equivocal language - ~~as~~ where God is at risk from becoming too transcendent. Myths are another non-cognitive attempt ~~as they are~~ and D.F. Strauss shifts the hermeneutical focus from a 'The story of a miraculous occurrence' to 'The ~~as~~ story of a miraculous occurrence, and ~~and~~ explaining a post-enlightenment transition where myths are able to be re-interpreted as non-factual occurrences and not to be taken literal. Symbol Erica Dinkler-von Schubert defines symbols as

patterns or objects that are able to point to an invisible metaphysical realm and take part in it and ~~are~~ allow us to gain an understanding ~~per se~~ the belief of a 'transcendent God'. This has further been ~~and~~ had philosophical support as thinkers such as Anselm and Descartes argue for the ~~a priori~~ existence of a 'transcendent God' through a ~~pro~~ means arguing that it is illogical to conclude that God does not ~~or~~ exist as the very definition of God implies that he necessarily exists and thus ~~argues~~ overcomes the erroneous attempts of atheistic thinkers to disprove God's existence.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This script has a good balance between AO1 and AO2.

a) A. J. Ayer may be well known for his involvement of the movement of the logical positivism, who deduced that statements may only be meaningful if they can be empirically verified (verified by the senses). This led to the development of the verification principle which is clearly applied in Ayer's 'God talk is evidently nonsense'. He stated that religious language cannot be meaningful as there is nothing that can count towards and concluded that God talk, is evidently nonsense.

In this particular passage Ayer is highlighting how religious language cannot be meaningful, not only for believers, but also for atheists and agnostics. Since agnostics claim that the existence of god is a probability, and atheists claim that it is at least probable no god exists both of these views still hold the view that the name god possesses meaning. This is something which Ayer disregards throughout the passage as the name god refers to a metaphysical being, meaning he is outside of our understanding and this means he cannot be empirically verified. This is what makes the claims by both agnostics and atheists to be nonsensical. In the passage Ayer highlights that all utterances about

god's name are equally non-sensical. This ties into his later paragraph in how theists may express that god's name may be identified in regularity and order in nature, and that statements such as 'it is thundering' or 'Jehova is angry' may only be significant if it is homologous to 'it is thundering'. However this is not what any believer would mean to assert in saying this of a god, being a metaphysical being, and having super-empirical attributes is not necessarily located in nature but is beyond human experience; for Ayer this means that equating god with nature is equally non-sensical.*

In addition to this, this highlights how believers themselves believe god to be out of human experience, making him unintelligible.** God is not an object of reason but rather an object of faith, this could mean that religious belief is taken on faith, this links to Kierkegaard's view that religious belief is a leap of faith in his views of the design argument. God is a thing of mystical intuition.

* ~~But~~ ^{Ayer} world dispose of arguments for existence of god based on these qualities such as the design argument which uses the natural world to infer god's existence.

If a mystic has a vision of god they may argue that anyone without this mystical intuition will not find it to be meaningful; they see their intuition to be a cognitive state which philosophers such as H.P. Owen, from Donovan's 'Can we know god through experience' would also conclude to be meaningful. Ayer ~~on~~ however states that 'a mystic cannot put into a hypothesis the object of their vision then they cannot claim to have gained facts, because if it were facts they had acquired they would be able to formulate an empirical hypothesis to which would allow them to be verified. In Donovan's passage this sense of knowing god through mystical intuition would be meaningless according to Martin Buber who claims that the I-Ya relationship that we have with god is ineffable (cannot be described) otherwise it becomes an I-It relationship. #
Ayer goes on to say that someone

may argue that it is not fair to dismiss someone when they are seeing god, and not dismiss them when they say they are seeing a yellow patch. Yet when someone is saying they see before them a yellow material thing, they are stating a synthetic proposition to which can be empirically verified, whereas if someone states to be seeing god, they are not only saying they are experiencing a special feeling (that Schuiermacher would say the purpose of religion is) but they are proposing that there exists a supreme being from whom they get this feeling. Ayer says that this cannot be the case as if they were ~~also~~ claiming to experience god, they are simultaneously claiming they are experiencing ~~that~~ something which is beyond human experience, and this cannot be meaningful or true.

Ayer himself is not concerned with this religious feeling, that Schuiermacher so concerns himself with. Rather, Ayer feels things that would allow us to gain religious knowledge. This cannot be

gained from religious myths as they themselves are 'metaphysical utterances' and cannot be significantly described. Therefore they cannot bring in any form of religious knowledge.

** This is similar to Anthony Flew's argument of religious language as to how believers hide behind phrases such as 'God moves in mysterious ways' to avoid criticisms raised against them, but Ayer is simply stating that believers do not deny that god transcends our understanding.

Ayer seems to deduce from his argument that religious experiences are interesting from a psychological point of view, and that they have no significant meaning when considering the argument for god's existence they are 'fallacious'. Furthermore that religious language cannot be meaningful as otherwise we would be able to deduce from it other empirical hypotheses which science may be applied in order to validate the statement, but, this is not the case.

b) In regard to Ayer's passage that 'god talk is evidentially nonsense', I would say that he adopts

a very narrow minded view on things being meaningful. It is clear to me that religious language is meaningful, similarly to how Braithwaite explained religious language expresses an intention to act a certain way, it is empirically verifiable to see the difference religion and religious language make to a person's life. They express notions that are important to a believer, and I think that religion is important. For me, I see religion as ~~holding~~^{being} an emblem of hope, and comfort. This would be taken away if we were to agree with Ayer in that if people ~~have~~ held religion in hope of eternal life in heaven this is made meaningless by Ayer. In turn this could lead to people no longer living morally as they have no purpose to act in a way that deserves reward, and ultimately this could lead to a collapse in society.

Also, it is clear to see that other philosophers regard religious language to be meaningful. Ludwig Wittgenstein's non-cognitive approach to religious language is something I find attractive as it allows believers to talk meaningfully

about god within their community, and carry on with things such as prayer. This is a contradiction to Ayer who would state that religious practices are all meaningless as they cannot be verified, similar to how Kant viewed prayer to be necessary to 'justify faith'. If this view of Ayer's was pursued then religion would eventually have to be disregarded as all meaning is stripped, which I find to be quite ludicrous as he simply doesn't understand the meaning and purpose it can bring to people's lives. ~~Saying~~ Saying this Ayer himself later did have a religious experience which obviously did mean something as it resulted in him writing an article called 'What I saw when I was dead'. This makes him claim that religious experience is interesting merely from a psychological view to be discredited. This point is quite insensitive towards believers as their religions seem to be viewed as an illness or injury that they should be treated as mental patients. If Ayer concluded this about something I believed in it would seem to take any positive connotations of said belief away which is actually quite disturbing.

I don't think Ayer can really hold much power over the idea of something having meaning by getting into the criteria of the verification principle as that itself is flawed as there is nothing that can count in its favour. Surely this makes his entire passage look laughable.

In regard to the passage given by Ayer has already disregarded meaning of language from truths and then does so for atheism and agnosticism then we are left with no scope to speak of god. This could result in not needing the word 'god' in language at all but also if we cannot meaningfully speak of religion then what is the point in having it. This could result in chaos forming over people who are dedicated to religion such as monks, or nuns. Their life would see get for little purpose in their eyes, and I find this not only to be a traumatic experience for those involved but also quite a universal problem seeing as there are so many different religions that are practiced globally.

Ayer's dismissal of classical proofs of god's existence such as the design/teleological argument I find

acceptable on the grounds that they are unconvincing anyway but also I understand his reasoning to that if god is not located in the natural world it cannot reflect his nature.

In contradiction to Donavon, Ayer also states that we cannot rely on intuition as it cannot be verified. This doesn't just affect religion but transcends to humanity as a whole. For if we cannot trust our intuition of other people then we cannot be certain of any subjective feelings or concepts such as relationships. As Bernard Rickett demonstrated in Donavon's passage, if we cannot be certain of our intuition of feelings because we are constantly misled.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This script is good in terms of synoptic links.

~~"religious assertions" "literal significance"
 "existence of god is a possibility" — metaphysics
 BUT "incompatible with them"
 - Verification Principle not just not definite but not even probable
 - "transcendent God"
 - Atheist v. Agnostic~~

As Ayer was a logical positivist and a member of the Vienna Circle who sought to move away from the obscure and florid language of 19th Century Continental Philosophy. As such Ayer sought to ground language in empiricism and link it to a scientific method. In his article 'God-talk is evidently nonsense' Ayer argues that as the idea of God is not one that can be empirically verified it has no meaning. This view has serious implications for the or everyday use of language and fails to match up to our experience of meaning; thus it fails to be convincing.

In this part of his article Ayer seeks to differentiate his view of religious language from the views of atheists and agnostics. He argues that "religious assertions" (statements about God) have no "literal significance" (meaning). This view is one which extends past both the atheist and agnostic assertion

that God cannot be proven. ~~As~~ ~~the~~ ~~destruction~~ ~~of~~ ~~metaphysical~~ ~~proofs~~ As Ayer points out in his introduction ^{destruction of metaphysical} ~~the~~ ~~destruction~~ ~~of~~ ~~metaphysical~~ ~~proofs~~ (those proposed by Anselm, Aquinas and scholastic thinkers such as Anselm and Aquinas) has largely undermined the view that we can prove the existence of God. For example Kant (an Enlightenment philosopher) discredited the ontological argument by stating that you cannot define something into existence; defining God does not prove him. Therefore it is understandable that an atheist could state that "it is at least possible that no God exists" because we are unable to present any definitive proof. Equally an agnostic may remain undecided for the same reasons.

However in this article Ayer goes further than this claim by stating that the very proposition "there is a transcendent God" has no meaning. This is due to Ayer's attempts to ground the idea of language in empiricism. Ayer argues that for a statement to have meaning it must either be analytically verifiable (true by definition) or synthetically verifiable (true due to empirical evidence). However a "transcendent God" is ~~so~~ metaphysical and ~~outside~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~empirical~~ so cannot be proven by physical evidence. Thus "all utterances about the nature

of God are nonsensical" as there is no means of verifying them. This view of language is grounded in the enlightenment school of thought as philosophers such as David Hume sought to move away from subjective forms of philosophy and instead ground it in empirical the scientific method, it was for this reason Hume wanted to commit metaphysical proofs "to the flames."

Yet whilst Hume was an atheist, Ayer argues that very belief has no meaning, to state that "there is no God" cannot have meaning as it is impossible to verify; ~~we cannot produce~~ ^{it is neither analytically} or synthetically verifiable. Equally an agnostic would state that there may or may not be a "transcendent God", the existence of such a being ^{to some extent} is probable but not proven.

Yet Ayer would argue that this view cannot be "probable" as you cannot produce empirical evidence for or against it, agnosticism too is meaningless.

An implication of the argument presented by Ayer is that it ~~would be~~ ^{is} impossible to hold any meaningful conversation about God, any statement could present no valid proposition. Yet even if we did, ^{only} use language that could be verified, Hick's eschatological ~~pi~~ defence allows religious language to have meaning. Hick argues that ~~from~~ after we die

we will be able to verify the existence of God, therefore statements about God can hold meaning. Despite this, the philosopher Anthony Flew presents the ~~theory~~ ^{principle} of falsification, in support of Ayer. Flew argued that religious believers "move the goalposts" by constantly qualifying their definition of God so that ~~we~~ it is impossible to disprove it. In some ways this seems a valid criticism as a look at early Judaism presents a God who literally walked in the garden of Eden and so was to some extent physical. In comparison we now see God as a metaphysical being and as such a being whose existence cannot be falsified. Yet here too Flew's eschatological defence negates this principle as through death God's existence can be falsified.

Another problem implied by Ayer's argument is that large parts ^{of} human vocabulary would become meaningless, words such as "love, justice, freedom" cannot be verified and yet we use them all the time. Swinburne solves this problem through his analogy of the "3 Toys in the Cupboard" as he argues that we all know what it means to state that the toys in the cupboard come alive when no one is observing them even if we cannot verify or falsify it. Thus Ayer's argument has troubling implications for human communication and conversation and so fails because it

does not fit with our experience and use of language.

This extract of Ayer's article is one of the first applications ~~Ayer~~ of the verification principle that Ayer makes. Ayer also looks at the ~~the~~ challenges presented by a super-empirical God. As he argues that if when we ~~expressed~~ talked about God we were simply making statements about the natural world our propositions ^{would} have meaning. ~~Thus~~ ^{Subsequently} if when we said "Jehovah is angry" we simply meant there was thunder we would be able to ~~present~~ present empirical proof of this and so verify the statement synthetically; giving it meaning. Yet Ayer dismisses this form of religion as unsophisticated and goes on to argue that since "sophisticated religions" do not limit their definitions of God to the physical world they can have no meaning as no evidence can be produced of the metaphysical.

This is hugely problematic for Ayer's argument that "all God-talk is evidently nonsense" as in stating that ~~or~~ propositions which limit God to the natural world possess "literal significance" he leaves the door open to pantheism. ~~Thus~~ Therefore, ~~philosophers~~ ^{a Jewish philosopher} Spinoza ~~also~~ ^{also} argued that the words God and nature ^{were} interchangeable "Deus sive ^{natura}"

can world legitimately agree that statements about God are verifiable and thus meaningful. As a consequence of Ayer's ethnocentrism and dismissal of an entire form of religion - pantheism - he himself allows for some forms of religious language to express "significant" propositions, thus disproving his claim that "all" talk of God is "nonsensical."

Another key proof of God that Ayer tackles in his article is religious experience. Ayer acknowledges that mystics argue religious experience reveals knowledge of God to them and so has a "cognitive faculty" (can reveal ^{real} information about the world). This knowledge is an intuitive form of knowledge that is advocated even by twentieth-century theologians such as ^{H.P.} Owen who argued it ^{was} ~~had~~ cognitive as it was analogous to our everyday experience in which we use the same form of direct, immediate knowledge. Yet Ayer also points out that one of the key parts of religious experience is that it is ineffable, a quality identified by William James in his study of mystical experience. Thus As a result mystics are not only unable to ~~produce~~ ~~propose~~ "express propositions" which are empirically verifiable they are unable to express any propositions at all.

This line of argument is similar to Wittgenstein's Picture Theory. As he argued that because there is a gap between what can be expressed verbally and non-verbally in order for something to be meaningful we must be able to picture it. As the mystic can neither picture the knowledge they have gained from their experience nor express it verbally ~~both~~ Ayer - and Wittgenstein - argue that their experience has given them no knowledge.

In this way Ayer undermines the idea of presenting religious experience as a way to verify God's existence and so concludes that religious language ~~religions~~ "does not ~~possess~~ possess any literal significance." Moreover, he states that the only ~~relevant~~ significance of a religious experience is psychological as it tells us about the state of mind of the subject. In this view he would be supported by Freud ~~also~~ the father of psycho-analysis who argued that all religious experience is simply wish fulfilment as it fulfills our need for a loving father figure (God).

An implication of this idea is that religious experience can provide no knowledge even for the subject, and so would be distrusted and questioned by them. Yet Baillie argued that religious experiences are

self-authenticating and so hold meaning for the subject and ~~we~~ in ~~some~~ ways we verified for the subject and thus hold meaning, even if they cannot explain it to anyone else and so cannot use it as proof. However, Donagan challenges this reliance on intuition as a form of knowledge because he argues that we cannot test our intuition and therefore we cannot rely on it as we have no means of ~~tell~~ discerning when it is true or false or even when we are using it.

Despite this, Ayer's all-or-nothing approach to religious experience ~~is~~ has ^{implications} ~~problems~~ for human interaction as we cannot verify knowledge we seem to "intuit" about other people. ~~The~~ Martin Barber distinguished between two forms of human relationship: I-It relationships which are analytical and objective and I-You relationships. These are direct person to person relationships which whilst ~~being~~ fragile and subjective are necessary for the human experience. In trying to limit meaning to that which is objective and verifiable Ayer undermines the value of I-You relationships and therefore fails to account for the human experience.

Ironically, for a man who sought to defend the scientific method, Ayer's verification Principle also

undermines scientific theory. ~~With~~ Thomas Kuhn acknowledged that science goes through "paradigm shifts" where it becomes fashionable to fund a particular area of research and ~~thus~~^{so} science itself cannot be considered entirely subjective. Moreover, Popper - also a member of the Vienna Circle - argued that as new scientific evidence is constantly being discovered we can never entirely verify anything as new evidence against a theory ~~may~~ may be discovered. Therefore, in seeking to limit meaning to that which can be ~~see~~ verified

Ayer undermines the scientific method that his argument rests upon. His own argument fails to live up to its own standards and therefore is not philosophically valuable.

In conclusion, Ayer's argument that "all god-talk is evidently nonsense" appears attractive at first, especially as he uses it to consistently undermine large parts of the religious experience. Yet upon inspection it becomes clear that Ayer's view of language is entirely incompatible not only with the human experience of meaning but also with the very scientific method that Ayer sought to defend. Consequently Ayer's argument that religious language has no "literal significance" fails

to be philosophically valuable or convincing. It is interesting to note that in later life, Ayer rejected his earlier assertion that ~~the~~ "God-talk" was meaningless, joining the ranks of both Wittgenstein and Flew as logical positivists who no longer believed that ~~the~~ the new "all God-talk is evidently nonsense" held ~~any~~ credibility.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This script shows how an integration of AO1 together with AO2 can work well with careful planning.

Paper Summary

This paper was first examined in 2010. It has been a significant and worthwhile feature of the current specification, enabling candidates to study sources in detail and to develop synoptic links.

In 2018 the new A level specification will be first examined (with AS in 2017). The new A level develops the opportunity to study sources. All A level components have anthologies, normally with four sources and these will have a compulsory question on all A level papers. The Philosophy sources are already popular with students and consist of Mackie on the problem of evil; the Flew, Hare, Mitchell discussion and also the debate between Copleston and Russell.

It can be noted that the ideas in the current anthologies can continue to be used in various ways across the new specification.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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