

Examiners' Report
June 2018

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 01

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Introduction

At this first sitting of the new A Level specification it was good to see some really excellent responses. Overall it seems candidates and centres have risen to the challenge of the new style of questions and the range of material to cover. Candidates made good use of the Anthology material in Question 3 but also in other questions where it was relevant which was pleasing to note.

There are areas to develop though as all get used to this new course. Balancing the amount of time spent on each question is one area candidates can improve upon. Paying close attention to the wording of the question and avoiding presenting material not relevant or not required will also help with timing and focus issues. The trigger words indicate the balance of AO1 and AO2 required in each type of question and the amount of space provided is an indication of how much time should be spent and a limitation on space encourages candidates to keep to this and to focus their writing for the amount of marks available. There were many responses to Question 2 that were far too long for the 12 marks available and although of high quality in some cases there were only up to 12 marks to award and this inevitably meant candidates spent more time on this question than was appropriate and then they may have struggled on the larger essay questions later in the paper.

It is important to select material carefully and to weigh up the strength of, or reasons for, a position and form a conclusion in the 'Assess' question and to engage fully with the question when prompted to 'Analyse' in question 3b ensuring candidates are employing the AO2 skill of providing logical chains of reasoning and making judgements as required by these questions and indicated on the SAMs. Weaker responses simply present contrasting views with no AO2 engagement with them. Dealing with the 'Clarify' instruction in Question 3a needs some attention to prevent candidates simply 'translating' the extract at the lower range of responses but we saw some excellent answers in this question as well.

Question 4, which includes the synoptic element of the course, saw some very high calibre responses. Candidates at the highest level drew on a range of detailed and carefully employed knowledge to deconstruct the issues and offer clear and sustained reasoning and judgement in relation to the question through reviewing and analysing the strengths and weaknesses of different views and forming clear judgements. There were some excellent examples of well-crafted and pertinent links made with other components studied and the best ones of these integrated them well to their essay in more than a few sentences, rather than presenting a clunky/tick box add on mini paragraph. This element is not optional if candidates are to be able to access the full range of the mark scheme therefore centres and candidates need to find a way to employ this in their teaching and learning throughout the course.

It remains essential that centres support their candidates by ensuring all of the specification is covered in teaching and that candidates are encouraged not to leave out areas in their revision as there are no alternatives to those questions set and there were a significant number of blank questions or answers where candidates used material that was not appropriate to the question set.

Question 1

There were some excellent full, yet concise, responses to this question where one theodicy was explained precisely. Theodicies from Augustine and Irenaeus were most popular followed by Process and Free Will Defence where there were much fewer answers, beyond these there were also some Buddhist and Hindu responses to the issue. Strong responses also used technical terms in relation to the question with confidence.

Weaker responses spent over half the answer explaining the problem of suffering, which was not required by the question, rather than exploring a solution which was required. Some simply referred to one solution briefly or wrote about several solutions briefly.

1 Explore key ideas of one solution to the problem of suffering.

The process thought theodicy is a solution to the problem of evil and suffering. Whitehead claims that God is a "great companion" - a fellow sufferer who understands humans. This suggests that God is not separate from but among us and thus can empathise and sympathise with our suffering. * This means we should not be critical about God because he is in pain too.

This solution suggests that the universe was not created out of ex-nihilo (nothing) but was created by pre-existing matter.¹ Central to the idea is that God ~~is~~ is not omnipotent nor is he ~~impotent~~ ^{and therefore only has coercive, persuasive powers to intervene}. When making the Universe, he knew everything will turn out okay ^(good) in the end and let it be. He knew this because of his omniscience. Also, God placed evolution because he knew how humans and animals would evolve thus it explains that evil and suffering is necessary to help us develop.

Griffins suggests that God's lack of power is balanced out by his abundant love, omni-benevolence and thus suggests that God cannot intervene because he cannot physically. He does however ^{try} to lead things to God because of his love for his creation, specifically humanity. Thus, God is not responsible for evil, his love would not let him make an evil world but his lack of power has.



This is an example of an answer on a Process solution that was awarded full marks. It is detailed, wide-ranging and focused entirely on the question.



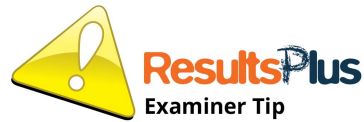
It is good to use scholarship to demonstrate your depth of knowledge.

1 Explore key ideas of one solution to the problem of suffering.

The problem of Evil ^{and suffering} ~~is~~ seeks to identify how the presence of evil in the world is compatible with the idea of an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God, ^{as we can see} presented with the inconsistent triad. This is the argument that asks how we can believe in an all loving, all powerful God, yet still have the sheer quantity of moral & physical evil in the world. One solution put forward to the problem of Evil, is by the theologian Irenaeus. The Irenaean Theodicy, put forward the view that God created mankind in the image of himself, however we are initially immature. Evil is present in the world to help us to mature and presents us with situations in life that aid our doing so. This process is also called the 'soul-making' theodicy as it ~~helps~~ is God helping us to shape our understanding of the world and leads us towards faith in God. This therefore shows that Irenaeus believed evil ^{and} suffering to be intentionally created by God to help us find our faith and reinforces the claim that God can still be omnipotent and omnibenevolent. The aim of this, Irenaeus claimed, was so that ~~to~~ we can become a child of God through the direction from all the ~~of~~ suffering in the world. This is the idea that we will be rewarded from our suffering & be welcomed into heaven. Theologians such as John Hick have since modified this theory with the idea of two creations.



This example reached Level 3, at 6 marks. The material on Irenaeus is good, if a little under-developed. There is some terminology and scholarship but one feels the candidate might have done more with this knowledge if they had not spent time outlining the problem at the start in this short answer question where time and space are limited, rather than pressing straight on to the solution as the question required.



Focus on the question and try not to 'warm up' by including too much material that cannot earn you marks.

Question 2

This proved a very popular topic with many candidates writing an unnecessarily large amount rather than tailoring their knowledge and enthusiasm to the requirements of a 12 mark 'Assess' question.

There was a great variety of approaches to this question. Good answers explained why and how the scientific cosmologies raised serious issues for specific religious beliefs; such answers showed a clear and succinct understanding of the Big Bang and/or Steady State theories and evolution and named the scholars who proposed them. Responses sometimes distinguished 'young and old earth creationism' and discussed ways to interpret the Bible in relation to Genesis accounts of creation; some used Barbour's models of relationship and there was reference to Overlapping or Non-Overlapping Magisteria.

Some candidates used Aquinas' Cosmological Arguments or Tennant's Design Argument legitimately where applied to a religious understanding of cosmology; some used Behe's irreducible complexity; some used Wittgenstein's language games; some critiqued the word 'incompatible'. There were also some good discussions of methodologies in terms of observation, hypothesis and the relationship of science and religion in relation to these elements.

There was pleasing reference to scholarship in the stronger responses where often a solid structure and a two-sided argument led to a clear conclusion.

Weaker responses tended to become narrative (and often inaccurate) in their accounts of science and gave a simplistic assessment not noticing the nuanced responses by theists. Others simply wrote a descriptive response about the Cosmological Argument perhaps suggesting candidates were hoping for a question on that topic instead where there was no reference at all to this question as set.

2 Assess the view that scientific cosmologies are incompatible with religious beliefs about creation.

(12)

There are many thinkers, such as Richard Dawkins, who say that science and religion are incompatible in their accounts of creation. While others such as Oxford professor Alistair McGrath and advocate of the Kalam cosmological argument William Lane Craig believe that science and religion can collaborate to form explanations for creation, or at least that they don't have to be at odds. In ~~most~~ reality, ^{of what} much ~~that~~ can be said of the compatibility of these two areas of study ~~can~~ comes down to the pre-supposed ideas of ~~whether~~ ^{the} one attempting ^{to} reconcile, or ~~to~~ further separate the two.

For example, William Lane Craig advocates for the Kalam cosmological argument, saying that God is ~~an~~ the originating cause for the universe (as opposed to Aquinas' cosmological argument holding God as the sustaining cause). The Kalam argument allows for the inclusion of the Big Bang Theory as it can say that God created the Big Bang. This is quite convincing for many modern Christians who see ~~the~~ ^{no} ~~issue~~ with the ^{scientific} ~~potential~~ evidence for the Big Bang as the explanation for where life came from, yet also believe in God as the necessary ~~object~~ being ^{from} which all contingent life within the universe ~~is~~ ^{was} made.

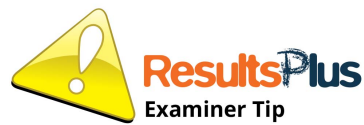
However, whilst some, such ~~as~~ as Lane Craig, have

reconciled the two forms of creation there are those who refuse to see the possibility of the two working together. For example the reductive naturalist Richard Dawkins, believes that yes, the universe was made by the Big Bang 13-15 billion years ago, but ~~he~~ says that it was only this initial singularity that created the world, not the influence of any God. The world can be explained in entirely naturalistic terms without remainder.

In the same way there are fundamentalist Christians who believe that the literal reading of the Genesis account of creation is the only explanation for the creation, this is young earth theory. However this is directly incompatible with scientific ~~the~~ theory as this claims the world to be around 100,000 years old whereas ~~the~~ science argues ~~&~~ evidentially that it must be at least 4 billion years old. Attempts have been made to reconcile the two approaches through gap theory, the idea that there were two stages in creation, ^{God's} ~~the~~ creation of the world ~~by God~~ and all the animals and plants ~~and then~~ a second creation, the creation of humans. This allows the existence of beings like dinosaurs prior to human existence and allows the earth to be around the age ^{estimated} ~~predicted~~ by science yet also accommodates the Genesis account of God's creation in some ways, ~~reconciling~~ making scientific and religious theories compatible.



This is an excellent example of a script earning full marks in this question. It has a great introduction, good content - the material on the Kalam argument is relevant, and it uses scholarship well. It is clearly structured and covers a wide range of material, assessing it carefully.



Structure your answer clearly for maximum impact.

2 Assess the view that scientific cosmologies are incompatible with religious beliefs about creation.

(12)

Aquinas uses 5 ways to prove the existence of God. ~~Motion, causation, contingency, purpose and teleological~~ The first three make up the cosmological argument.

The Big Bang Theory is a scientific way which proves the creation of the universe. It's the materialistic view that the universe is made of matter. It takes the view that the world was created 15-16 billion years ago.

Whereas creationism is the view that God created everything from the start. It can be split into two categories, Young Earth creationism and Old Earth Creationism. Young-Earth, follows ~~the book of~~ genesis carefully and strongly agrees with the earth being created in 6 days. This view isn't open to any other view and rejects them. ~~Old Earth Creationism is where~~ The Big Bang and Creationism cannot work alongside each other because one view is atheist (Big Bang) and one is theist (creationism) therefore the belief in God is the underlying difference between them.

Darwin came up with the theory of evolution as a way of explaining how organisms developed. His ideas are backed up by DNA. All his views depend on science and he believes that the belief in God is a lazy approach to simply fill the gaps in our minds.

The view of the big bang has been proved by many scientists and for the people who need evidence for the creation, this is the approach they would take. Whereas if you have beliefs in God, you would take the view of Creationism.

If you follow Genesis precisely and believe all it says (Young Earth Creationism) then you cannot be open to the view of the big bang as it would sufficiently contradict Aquinas ^{seems to have} ~~backed up~~ the creationist view, through his design argument, he states that the universe has purpose, cause and motion therefore there has to be a 'causer' ~~and motion~~ i.e. God, therefore the big bang would be rejected.



This script earned 8 marks, at the top of Level 2. It has a range of material but needs development and it is a little simplistic in its presentation of whether these views are compatible or not. It needs more direct reasoning and judgement to reach into Level 3.



'Assess' clearly in your answer and offer a clear conclusion.

Question 3 (a)

This question focused on the nature of religious experience and asked for reference to (though not long quotation from) the passage. It is important to note that Question 3(a) is not about writing out lines from the extract and then putting them in your own words, which many students did. Nor was it wise to spend time explaining in detail the context of the discussion and how previously they had been discussing cosmological themes (some candidates did seem to know more about this than the religious experience section).

The best quality answers identified key ideas from the set paragraph and then linked this to their knowledge of, for example, Otto and James, and confidently discussed technical vocabulary such as ineffability, numinous, direct/indirect, subjectivity and corporate, as well as giving examples, such as St Teresa of Avila whilst not straying from the issue of the *nature* of religious experience. Good responses used knowledge of other scholars to unpack and explain Copleston's view of religious experience and referred to where this fitted in to his debate with Russell whilst maintaining focus on the question and not the remainder of the debate.

Weaker answers quoted but did not clarify and explain the ideas in the passage, or rehearsed the argument for the existence of God based on religious experience and did not address the nature of religious experience as the question required.

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about the nature of religious experience.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

This extract is taken from a debate between Russell and Copleston in 1948 in which they debate over the cosmological arguments success in proving gods existence and religious experiences ability to prove gods existence. In this particular extract Copleston suggested that religious experience provide existence of god.

Copleston refers to a type of experience that in part points towards gods existence as 'I don't mean simply feeling good. I mean a loving but unclear awareness of some

object" This description is similar to Otto's description of religious experiences as numinous, stating that ~~the~~ people who experience them are overwhelmed with an indescribable feeling of joy and feel the presence of God. Otto claimed that we should believe numinous experiences as proof of God as they are entirely different to normal experiences.

Copleston goes on to state that religious experiences are "something transcending itself". This links to William's 4 descriptions of religious experiences as Passivity (happen without the control of the person) noetic (pass on some type of knowledge) ineffable (cannot be explained) and transcendent (are beyond meaning they are beyond us and our understanding. These 4 things make religious experiences so different from normal experiences they must be believed.

Copleston Furthermore Copleston claims that religious experiences cannot be "pictured or conceptualised". This links to William's distinction between ^{Public} personal and ^{Private} personal experiences. ~~Personal~~ ^{Public} can be empirically seen by other people

for example an everyday ordinary experience which reminds someone of God's magnificence such as a beautiful sunset. However private experiences cannot be verified by others such as indescribable and ^{private} describable religious experiences in which a person may have a dream ⁱⁿ which ~~they~~ they experienced God but be unable to put into words how they felt. Williams & Coppenworth would regard all these dissonances as religious experiences which prove the existence of God.



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Examiner Comments

This response scored in the top Level, Level 3 at 9 marks. After a little warming up it uses the passage well to explain the nature of religious experience with good reference to scholarship and clear exposition of relevant terminology. It avoids simply translating or repeating the passage and this contributes to it being a high scoring response.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

No need to repeat information on the page about where the item is from, although demonstrating a relevant understanding of the context, briefly, can be useful.

3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about the nature of religious experience.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

This extract is adapted from 'A Debate on the Existence of God' - A debate between Bertrand Russell and Father Frederick Copleston, F. C., BBC Radio, 1948, Oxford Anthology.

This topic is on religious experiences. Swinburne argues that there are 5 types of religious experiences; ~~the~~ ~~ordinary~~, ~~extraordinary~~, ~~describable~~ private, ~~incommunicable~~ private experiences & unspecific general feeling of God.

The phrase "something which cannot be pictured or conceptualized, but of the reality of which doubt is impossible". This phrase suggests that

God doesn't have a human known form. When we ~~report~~ have an experience with someone, we have factors such as size, shape, etc to relate & understand the experience but with God, because we have never met him, do we really understand the feeling? "something which cannot be pictured", suggests that what do we think or see when we are going through the experience. Is it really overwhelming that our senses stop working so we can't "picture it"? A philosopher argues that in our everyday experiences, our senses deceive us, how can we trust them during a religious experience?

Another phrase "By religious experience, I don't mean simply feeling good", suggests that religious experiences have a purpose, it's not there for people to enjoy. There could be a hidden message in the experience that many fail to acknowledge because they're too overwhelmed by the experience. Some In Christianity people have got religious experiences after fasting for days or under altered mental state. This could mean that people could self induce a religious experience to feel good

because you have to be in an altered mental state & that isn't hard to do.

~~The response~~ ~~to~~ ~~scientific~~ ~~evidence~~ Psychologists argue that some have extra sensors in the front temporal lobe where it's easy to hallucinate something that really isn't happening. The phrase "there is actually some objective cause of that experience" suggests that there are other reasons why people may have a religious experience & it can be scientific too. As you need to be in an altered mental state, having psychological issues & experiencing them isn't a surprise. Maybe all these people who have religious experience could have a psychological issue.



This response was at the top of Level 2 and scored 6 marks. Although wide-ranging it strays away from the issue of the nature of religious experience and includes more material on the range of the argument for the existence of God based on religious experience, including alternative explanations for religious experience, and therefore there is not enough on the real nature of experience to reach into the top level. Where it does refer to the passage there is some useful comment although this could be developed further with reference to scholars such as James or Otto.



Again, no need to repeat source information on the page about where the item is from.

Remember to focus on the issue the question directs you to rather than the broader argument here.

Question 3 (b)

Many candidates here made good use of material from the anthology to develop answers that offered a largely accurate account of the debate within religious experience as a proof of God. This was a well answered question generally with many candidates showing very secure understanding of the weaknesses of religious experience which may lead to the conclusion that it fails. Overall there was a good understanding of the main protagonists and their arguments and some good analysis attacking the question directly.

At the higher range there were very full responses that used an excellent structure to analyse the success of the argument for the existence of God based upon religious experience. A firm favourite from the legacy specification, this gave candidates a chance to demonstrate their knowledge on Swinburne, James, Otto, Russell, Copleston, Hume, Schleiermacher, Dawkins, Freud and Ramachandran. Pupils discussed the cumulative argument, credulity, testimony, types of religious experience and famous examples such as St Paul, St Teresa of Avilla, Muhammad, the Toronto Blessing and Benny Hinn. The strongest responses were those who were able to use this knowledge critically and who made judgements throughout. Swinburne, Dawkins and Persinger were all held to account and their views interrogated well.

Weaker responses sometimes just gave opinions without any scholarly reference or failed to distinguish the different forms of argument. Some focused so much on the weaknesses that any strengths were missed out, so likewise any possible counter arguments which would have further shown AO2.

There are three exemplars for this question demonstrating marks at the top of Level 5, just into Level 5 and at the top of Level 3.

(20)

In this essay I will analyse the view that the argument for the existence of God based on religious ~~long~~ experience fails to prove the existence of God.

Firstly, in Exodus 3 is the story of Moses and the Burning bush. This is an extraordinary experience which defies the laws of nature. Such an experience should be accepted due to Richard Swinburne's (21st Century British philosopher) Principle of Testimony, where we should believe others unless there is a reason to doubt them. Therefore, ~~the~~ science cannot prove that this event did not occur and for it to have happened there is a necessity ~~to~~ for a higher ~~power~~ being outside of space and time for it to occur. This being would be God. However, at times people who have religious experiences are in an unusual mental state. Ruckelshaus stated that "there is no difference between a man who eats too little and sees God and a man who ~~eat~~ ^{drinks} too much and sees snakes". This implies that people who may have religious experiences may be hallucinating and if for example they did fast, the credibility of the religious experience decreases.

for example in Luke 4, when Jesus was tempted by Satan three times after a ~~40~~ forty day and night fast. It is easy to believe that this ~~did not~~ ^{did not} occur due to Jesus' mental state. Although, Brian Davies ~~said~~ would disagree. This is because sometimes in order to get the most out of the experience you may need to be in an ~~an~~ unusual state. For example to see all of Paris, you would need to be in an unusual location i.e. the Eiffel Tower. Overall, the religious experience does not fail to prove God's existence, as He is a necessary being (a being that has and will always exist.)

~~Secondly~~, A criticism of religious experience is that God is incorporeal, meaning He is not made of any physical matter/substance, so one cannot say 'here He is'. Also, God is ^{everywhere, therefore} ~~outside of space~~ & you cannot say 'He is always here'. To recognise God, one must understand God, however as we can never understand God, it is not possible for us to recognise Him. This means that those who have had an experience and claimed to see God are ~~not~~ ~~be~~ lying or falsely mistaken as they would not be able to recognise God. This leads to the conclusion that God ~~not~~ does not exist, because if religious experiences are part of the foundations of religion

then, it needs to be ~~not~~ re-evaluated. On the other hand, in Isaiah 6, Isaiah saw God sitting on His throne in heaven, and as well as angels and ~~flaming~~ flaming creatures. According to Rudolf Otto this would be a numinous experience, where it is self-authenticating and God would ensure that truth and reality is guaranteed as part of the experience. In order for truth and reality to be guaranteed there must be a higher being to make sure this is happening, a higher power outside of space and time and this would be God. Overall, religious experience does not fail to prove the existence of God, even if it may lead to a circular argument (fallacy of begging the question). The fact that religious experiences are self-authenticating ensure what ~~is~~ happened is true.

Lastly, Karl Marx (German sociologist) put forward Marxism, where the emergence of religion can be explained as an effective method for the few to control the many. He believed the ruling class created religion to control the lower class, by providing them hope and benefits, especially in the afterlife. He called religion the 'opiate of the masses,' meaning that people used religion as a drug to cope with their daily life. He thought religion ~~was~~

was harmful to society and we are better off without it and it is an illusion. This means that if ~~many~~ ^{many} people were convinced by the idea that there is a God who can help them and will be there for them, by projecting qualities that they needed from a God, they would end up hallucinating, ~~even~~ and would call it a religious experience, when they thought they encountered the Divine. The problem is this is fallibility, as they would have really wanted to believe their ^{religious} experience is true, even if it is not. Despite this, Hick put forward the eschatological verification, which concerns the end times. After death, divine judgment we would be able to see if religion was just an illusion and whether or not religious experiences are ~~the~~ true or not. Overall, ~~religious~~ ^{religious} experience ~~does not~~ ~~show~~ ~~that~~ ~~God~~ ~~does~~ ~~not~~ ~~exist~~ fails to prove the existence of God, as according to Marx religion is man-made.



This first response scored near the top of Level 5 earning 19 marks. It is wide-ranging, interesting and there is some good AO2 evident throughout the response, this is clearly the top level and near the top of the level at that as it has made the material selected address the question well.



Drawing on material from across the specification is legitimate and useful if applied well to the topic at hand.

- Subjectivity

(b) Analyse the view that the argument for the existence of God based on religious experience fails to prove the existence of God.

(20)

Religious experience can vary in types due to being numerical, mystical or conversion and so on. This can create a wide spread amount of evidence which is beneficial for the argument. ~~This~~ This makes it more probable than not to have occurred.

Following on from this Sunburne layed out two principles in which we should consider before we discontinue a persons religious experience. The principle of testimony states that if X ~~is~~ is present then its present and we have no reason to dispute that along with the principle of credibility which is based around if it happened ~~and~~ the way the person layed it out then it probably happened. This creates a strong foundation for the evidence gathered in that it can attribute to the ~~belief in~~ ^{existence of} God.

However issues become present due to the very nature of God himself across many religions the definition of God varies suggesting different things or ~~the~~ ^{truths} revealed within a religious experience.

When referring to theistic religions there is a bigger belief of the personal God one that acts with the world and can influence us, ~~and~~ there are experiences to do with revealing the truths about God and ~~and~~ Jesus

through either theophany or Christophany, this suggests something of an ^{imminent} ~~transcendent~~ God. However this can't be said the same for ~~western~~ eastern religions as there's a higher belief in ~~re~~ the world and truths are revealed through the world and experience like Buddha and the tree of enlightenment, more of an ^{transcendent} ~~immanent~~ God. This is a ~~problem~~ problem for religious experience in the ~~process~~ proof of the existence of God because it's suggesting two different Gods, this is incompatible as suggested by Hume. God can't be both immanent and ~~transcendent~~ transcendent as he can't be both within space and time like humans because it would undermine his definition of ^{being} omnipotent. *!

Another issue ~~re~~ the existence of God faces in reference to religious experiences is due to it being an ~~extra~~ inductive argument, although inductive relies upon evidence which there is a cumulative case for religious experience, there is the concern of something ultimately disproving it in the future, as evidence could eventually ~~come~~ ^{come} against it which is a problem for religious experience. However the same argument could be pressed for all knowledge we have acquired based on evidence.

Another issue mentioned by Copston in the ^{text} ~~text~~ is

that of subjectivity. Due to experiences * being down to the individual perception especially when they are private rather than public, it causes problems when it comes to expressing an objective entity such as God. It also will make it difficult to explain due to its ineffable nature to those who have little faith in God or no faith at all such as Atheists. This could mean that the application for religious experience can only be meaningful for those already adopting the belief system.

*¹ It could further mean that experiences are based around what we want to experience to fulfil our beliefs, its down to interpretation rather than what it could actually ^{convey} ~~convey~~. However Hich mentions that in the end they could mean and correlated to the same thing when we will learn through eschatological verification.

In conclusion the evidence of religious experience is strange to the amount that has occurred but also the claim that its is the primary foundation of religion causing institutions like the Church to ~~become~~ ^{become} secondary. This is due to experiences relating back to Moses and the burning bush. However the very foundations of the argument itself across ~~are~~ all religions can be heavily criticised undercutting the integrity of the argument itself. This is an overall problem because the inductive nature could

ultimate ultimately cause it to be disproved

So in reference to it being able to prove God it suggests unlikely but more probable to those who have a foundation in the idea of God first



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Examiner Comments

This response made it into Level 5, at the bottom end with a mark of 17. It is a little clunkier than the previous response but there are some good points made here from the range it selects. It covers a fair amount of ground and there is evidence of some muscular assessment.



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Examiner Tip

Try to make your essay flow, keep a good structure and refer to the question in your analysis.

(b) Analyse the view that the argument for the existence of God based on religious experience fails to prove the existence of God.

(20)

Copleston and Russell debate religious experience at length throughout the radio broadcast. The basis of this argument is that of whether religious experience proves the existence of God. The

There are many types of religious experience. The most common of which are prayer and the ruminous. However, many experiences have been said to have happened. The miracles, mystical experiences and corporate experiences have all been reported as to have happened.

There is an argument to suggest that the argument for from religious experience is one that doesn't prove the existence of God. The nature of religious experiences makes it very difficult to say that it proves the ~~the~~ existence of God. The idea of its ineffability suggests that there is a viewpoint to ~~argue~~ ~~argue~~ argue that the experience didn't happen. If people are unable to describe the experiences that are happening to them then why should we believe ~~what~~ ^{when} they tell us they have

had a religious experience. However, the principle of credibility suggests that we should believe them as we have had no experience to see counter what they are saying. Furthermore, Wittgenstein would say that we ~~understand~~ understand what is meant by a religious experience and so we can allow what they are saying to have meaning.

Another way that we can argue against religious experience proving the existence of God is that the principle of testimony. This principle can also be known as the 'leaky bucket' argument. This essentially says that you are unable to make a strong argument with ^{lots of} ~~the~~ weak arguments. A lot of testimonies within religious experience are very weak. This is due to many factors. The first of these being that many experiences happen ~~that~~ ^{when} someone is under the influence of drugs or they have a history of mental health issues. You have to be careful ~~when~~ ^{of} when you disregard testimony because of mental health, but

with the knowledge we have, it is reasonable to say that the ~~argument~~^{testimony} has been tainted. Furthermore, these experiences tend to happen to mainly already religious people which could show that there is a slight agenda that these people have. However, there are still examples of non-religious people having religious experiences which means that there maybe something there. An example of this is St Paul's conversion experience.

In conclusion, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that religious experiences do not prove the existence of God. One of the main reasons that this is the case is that many people would expect these experiences to happen to them if they were credible, but they don't.



This response was awarded a mark at the top of Level 3 of 12 marks. There is a range of material but not a sufficiently wide range to reach into Level 4 and there are some errors. It is a little short for a 20 mark response and although it reaches the top of Level 3 it has not done enough in terms of breadth or depth of detail and analysis to reach further.



Try to use a wide range of material from an argument to present your knowledge in detail and depth when analysing the issue.

Question 4

There were some very impressive responses to this question; students evidently were well prepared and generally showed a good understanding of the issues. The debate and the various explanations were generally explored competently with some good argumentation and an appropriate use of technical terms. The use of clear signposting was welcomed to show what other components candidates were using to make their synoptic links. This was done without being clunky or halting the flow of argument by a pleasing number of candidates. Many candidates were unable to earn further marks and enter Level 5 given they made no synoptic link even though they had written an otherwise excellent answer. Some of the weaker responses attempted links but the quality of the essays was poor due to being vague or simply descriptive rather than evaluative and addressing the question.

In terms of general content, some candidates tried to get in every area in the topic and so had lots of short paragraphs explaining a number of approaches to religious language which became rather list-like and AO1 heavy without really referring to the question itself. Other candidates did better to focus on a few areas but give strengths and weaknesses and refer to the question more. Many candidates deployed and discussed key terms such as cognitive/non-cognitive and realist/anti realist and were able to show an understanding of the complexity of the issue. There were some excellent answers that critically evaluated religious language often journeying through verification, falsification, analogy, symbol and language games in order to come to an overall opinion. Popular scholars referred to were: Wittgenstein, Ayer, Hick, Flew, Wisdom, Popper, Hare, Mitchell, Tillich, Phillips and Aquinas. The commentaries on the falsification principle seemed to be of a higher standard than in previous years (unsurprising considering the content of the 2nd and 3rd anthology texts). Weaker answers were limited in the range of knowledge and the ability to evaluate, there were some simplistic answers e.g. candidates writing a thin description about anthropomorphism.

In terms of links, some candidates made excellent synoptic links to other component papers of Religious Studies. Many made insightful connections to the ways of interpreting the New Testament, and other candidates made impressive links to ethical language; there were also very academic discussions of difficulties in language within Islam and Judaism. There were some responses that lacked any synoptic link and this limited the marks available; for some candidates this was simply because they ran out of time, other candidates had either forgotten, or did not understand this part of the task.

There are three exemplars for this question, illustrating full marks, 27 marks so safely into Level 5 and also one at 21 marks, in the middle of Level 4.

4 Evaluate the view that religious language is meaningful if understood correctly.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Religion and Ethics
- New Testament Studies
- Study of Religion.

(30)

In this essay, I will be attempting to show the view that religious language is meaningful if understood correctly.

To begin with, however, religious language is non-cognitive, anti-realist language and is subjective in its nature concerned with symbols, metaphors and myths. This makes it language that is subjective rather than factual and so according to the verification principle becomes meaningless. This is because religious language is concerned with the metaphysical which cannot be verified empirically, making it meaningless. This is also supported by logical positivism, where the existence of God or symbolic meaning of religious can't be proven logically. Symbols such as the cross in Christianity or the crescent moon and star in Islam become meaningless and have no value.

In contrast Tillich argues that symbols cannot be

discredited as they are personal beliefs of a religion and hold inherent value to the believer. This makes it meaningful when understood of its significance, for instance the Cross is used apart of worship and holds significant meaning to devout Roman Catholics. In the same way, ~~the~~ the religious symbol in Islam refers to the meaning that Muslims hold. Although religious language can be seen as equivocal, Muslims find meaning in language presented through the Qur'an and Hadith. One hadith notes that the prophet Muhammad is the 'seal' of the prophets. The use of the word 'seal' is used to signify that Muhammad is the last prophet sent by Allah. The use of this language becomes significant to Muslims as they believe Muhammad was also the greatest prophet to have ever lived and none will come after him. Therefore to refute that this language is meaningless would be to discredit the symbolic language used. Once the language is understood correctly and what it means, for instance 'seal' referring to a close, ~~or~~ and referring to the last of the prophets, the language becomes meaningful. This 'seal' also refers to the physical mark or seal attested to by the hermit Bahira which gives significance to the word ~~and~~ makes it meaningful language.

In contrast we can see how the equivocal nature of religious language ~~is~~ can become meaningful due to its subjective nature. Dawber criticises Malcolm's use of 'is' ~~can~~ when defining God, as an 'is' is used to define or comment on something. For example the Queen 'is' the head of the ~~Wippen~~ state (defining) or this 'is' a hippo (comment). Malcolm's use of this 'is' therefore becomes confusing and so shouldn't be used in talk about God. Similarly Descartes states God is God because he exists, predicating existence of God. Kant criticises this by saying that existence is not a good-making quality, ~~and~~ rather characteristic or attributes should be used. Existence is not an attribute. Dawber and Kant ultimately tackle the language used here and show this shows how religious language can be seen as meaningful.

On the other hand, Wittgenstein's language games provides an argument that make religious language meaningful. People play different language games and this covers the distinction between meaningful and meaningless. When you speak the same language game, you are able to communicate effectively and thus make language meaningful. This works when two religious people are having a discussion.

If both understand the 'rules' of the game each of them are playing, then religious language becomes meaningful, but only when playing the same game.

Russell ~~that~~ provides a syllogism where he states, all men exist, Santa is a man. Therefore Santa exists. Clearly we know this to be wrong as Santa is a fictitious character and is not real. However, the point to be made here is the language used. If we replace Santa with God, we can see a clear problem arise. In this case religious language, as Russell points out is used to provide nonsensical outcomes. If we reject Santa's existence, then we should also reject the existence of God. This evidently shows the issue with language and thus supports the viewpoint that religious language is meaningless.

~~However, beliefs about religion and the language are simply down to human nature~~ However, we can know that religious language is meaningful when understood correctly. This is how via negativa supports religious language as meaningful. Rather than stating what God is and thus using equivocal language such as 'God is good' we should state that 'God's goodness is not like human goodness.'

Another example is 'God is not love' to point out that he is so much more than that term, he is beyond it. In this aspect religious language is meaningful when we understand what God is not. This thus avoids the issue of equivocal language which is subjective in nature.

To conclude I believe religious language when understood correctly can provide meaning. This can be seen through language games, via negativa and symbolic language which all require a degree of understanding. Once you understand this correctly, religious language becomes meaningful.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This is an example of a very good response that was awarded full marks. There is a good range and variety of material here, there is a clear structure and a good link made with Islam. The candidate marshals their material well making good AO2 judgements throughout.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

A clear structure to the longer essays is very useful.

It helps to signpost your link section to the examiner so it is clear what other component that you have studied you are linking this topic to.

4 Evaluate the view that religious language is meaningful if understood correctly.

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The view that religious language is meaningful but only when understood has been a subject of debate within philosophy. Hare suggests the idea of bliks to counter the concept that religious language is meaningless. A blik is something which is true to a certain person. Hare goes on to explain this concept through the parable of the lunatic which suggested that the lunatic believed all professors wanted to kill him. However, his friends tried to demonstrate that he was wrong but the lunatic didn't believe it as it was his truth and meaningful to him. Through this, Hare compares the lunatic to the religious believer and says that religious language is only meaningful to the person who ~~experiences~~ has and shares the bliks.

However, Anthony Flew believed in the verification principle which was originally made by the Vienna Circle who were logical positivists, and made in the 1920s. The view is that for something to be meaningful,

the statement must either be synthetic, analytical, or mathematical. He goes on to determine that religious language is a subjective idea which does not fit into none of these categories. Since this is the case, religious language must be meaningless whether you believe it to be true or not.

~~This concept is further supported through the idea of morality.~~ The verification principle received a huge backlash on its premise as the theory itself failed in providing for its own critique. This would mean that by using the verification principle, it would be meaningless to use this principle as it is not synthetic, analytical or mathematical which would therefore mean religious language can still be meaningful. In addition, the concept of morality within religion shows that religious language can ~~take~~ in nature be meaningful. The divine command theory states what is good and bad through the ten commandments which can be understood within society and is the base line of laws in society. Since morality is clearly understandable within religious language, it in itself must be meaningful if understood.

On the other hand, religious language's concept of morality within the bible can be seen as subjective and not truly understandable such as the subjective nature of 'love' in situation ethics when facing a moral dilemma. Since it cannot truly be understood when discussing God's love as it is beyond us, we don't have a clear sense of morality which would make it meaningless.

Furthermore, A.J. Ayer created the falsification principle that concluded that you must be able to falsify a claim or verify to suggest its verifiability. He believed that 'God died a death of a thousand qualifications' which means you can never truly falsify God to a believer because of his faith. This would therefore be meaningless to discuss God since it cannot be falsified, even to a person who understands this language.

Wittgenstein goes on to explain that religious language is in fact meaningful, but only to those who understand the language and terminology being said. He uses his language game theory to do so as it suggests that for somebody to understand what is being said they must be 'playing the same game'. Since you don't understand the 'game' being played

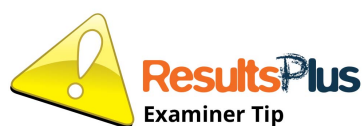
which in this sense is religious language, it would mean that to you it is meaningless but meaningful to those who understand it. It goes on further by suggesting that although some people can understand aspects of what is being said, they can not grasp the whole ~~truth~~ to understanding of what is being said as you aren't aware of their experiences.

However, you could use the concept of 'Via Negativa' to show that religious language is meaningless. The via negativa is an idea that since we cannot understand what God is, we can understand what God is not to grasp an understanding of what he is. This claim is however meaningless as although we can grasp what God is not by speaking of the negatives, we still cannot understand what God is as he is transcendent and is not comparable to anything of this world. Therefore, we can never truly understand what God is and therefore discussing him and his existence would be meaningless. This idea is supported by the premises added by Bertrand Russell which suggests that the universe is a brute fact, and therefore should not try to work on out the unknowable.

To conclude, religious language should not be considered meaningful even to those who claim to 'understand' it as there is no true way of understanding religious language as most of it is either subjective or beyond our rational understanding. Since this is the case, religious language must be considered meaningless.



This response made it into Level 5 and was awarded 27 marks. The examiner is not banged over the head with the links material but it is clear that the candidate has studied Ethics from their references to Divine Command Theory and to Situation Ethics (note only one link is required and here perhaps more could have been made of one of them rather than including two although they are legitimate). There is a good range of knowledge and coherent and logical reasoning is evident, the candidate has done enough to get securely into Level 5.



Make one link in more detail rather than scattering a few references in your answer - this response avoids that but more detail on one link is good advice.

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In 1920, a group of philosophers formed a group called the 'Vienna Circle', whereby it would distinguish what language is and is not. Such meaningful language would include definitions, such as "All bachelors are males", which is true by definition, mathematical equations such as " $2 + 2 = 4$ ", and synthetic statements that are proven true and meaningful through empirical evidence, which appeals to the five senses. From this, philosophers such as A. J. Ayer determined religious language as meaningless, as it failed to be verifiable. However, critics of the verification principle portrayed here by Ayer argue that historical events, which aren't available to the senses now, cannot be verified. From this, Ayer developed the Strong and Weak Verification principle, whereby the Weak Verification Principle enabled some leeway into accepting historical accounts as meaningful. However, Ayer along with members of the Vienna Circle, didn't regard religious language as meaningful still.

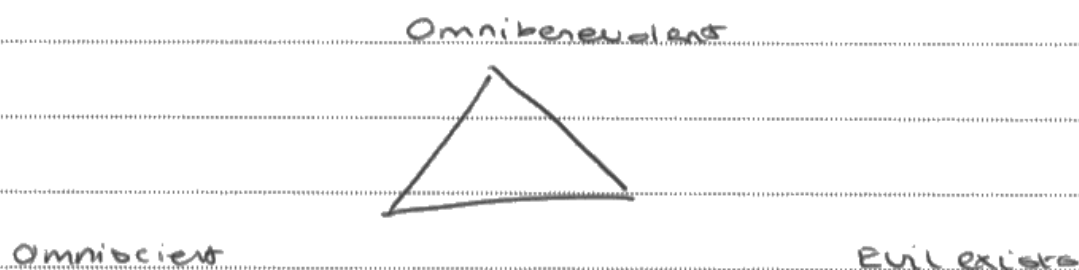
Wittgenstein would argue that religious language can be meaningful if understood correctly, with his concept of 'Language Games'.

This held that ~~language~~ understanding language is just like understanding a game. Once you understand the rules of a game, the game makes sense to you. Here, Wittgenstein is clearly attempting to defend religious language, holding that once you understand it, it becomes meaningful.

Within the religion and ethics topic, meta-ethics, which refers to a higher level of understanding ethics, attempts to demonstrate what we mean by meaningful. Within this topic are the same ideas portrayed by A. J. Ayer previously, defining what is meant by the word 'meaningful', therefore this section isn't really influencing the response to this question. Within the New Testament, then, one could argue that the word of Jesus and his actions, parables, miracles demonstrate that the disciples, who were followers and supporters of Jesus, understood correctly the religious language that Jesus spoke, and it was therefore meaningful to them; it portrayed a clearer picture of God and how they should behave. For Jewish groups such as the Pharisees, Jesus' language and actions seemed to go against the word of the Torah, the Jewish law, they took this literally, and conflicted with Jesus when he did not disagree with their belief, but the way they went about it, such as the 'fence of the law' they erected. They therefore misunderstood the religious language, and as a result Jesus, who was there to guide them in the right direction, had become meaningless. This demonstrated that religious language is

meaningful if understood correctly. Fable forward throughout history, and Christianity still stands today, with millions of supporters. To them, religious language is meaningful as they understand it, and argue that non-believers find it meaningless as they don't understand it.

The problem of evil, however, can render some religious language as meaningless to some. J. L. Mackie proposes the logical inconsistent triad, whereby religions such as Christianity use their religious language to portray God as 'omnibenevolent', meaning all good, 'omnipotent' meaning all powerful, and 'omniscient' meaning all knowing. He proposed that through the existence of evil in the world, such language contradicts with their idea of God, making it meaningless perhaps.



Mackie argues that all 3 propositions logically cannot exist.

As it is evident that evil exists in the world, through natural evil such as the 2004 boxing day tsunami, and moral evil caused by humans such as the genocide of 6 million Jews during the Holocaust, then this doesn't portray an 'all-loving God'. An all-loving God wouldn't allow such evil upon his humans. Furthermore, an

omniscient God would know of such evil, and if all powerful too then God would stop such evil. What Mackie does here is render one (if not all) of religious language that refers to characteristics of God as contradictory, in an attempt to disprove the existence of God, and therefore make religious language meaningless. Mackie correctly understands the definitions of such language, and therefore can't misinterpret their meaning.

In conclusion, one could argue that religious language is meaningful if correctly understood. This attempt by atheists argues that atheists don't understand, and is meaningless to them. However, talk of the universe supported by scientific evidence such as appealing to empirical evidence, the verification principle, and Mackie deducing religious talk of characteristics of God help to prove that even when understood correctly, it may not be meaningful. Mackie also holds that due to contradictions in religious language, he believed ~~that~~ themselves do not fully understand correctly religious language when used in problems in God's existence such as the problem of evil and suffering in the world.



Although this response contains accurate information it becomes rather list like. There is some simplistic assessment but it is more a list of views than an integrated evaluative essay. There is material linking the topic to the New Testament Studies which is relevant but overall the quality of the response is of Level 4 at 21 marks. The evil and suffering section could perhaps have been made more of to make it more directly relevant and appear less of a digression given it is from this component but not fully tied to addressing the question by the candidate.



Maintain your focus on the question and apply your knowledge to the question with clear evaluative comment throughout.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, centres are offered the following advice:

- Centres should ensure all the specification content is thoroughly covered
- Centres need to ensure candidates are prepared for making links to other components (papers) they have studied for Question 4. Indicating in their answer that they are doing this is helpful

Candidates should:

- Pay careful attention to the time they are advised to spend on each question and write according to the space available in the booklet
- Tailor knowledge and understanding to the demands of the question and thus target their material in a way to earn maximum credit for their knowledge
- Make the correct balance between AO1 and AO2 material in relevant questions (notably in Q2 where there are 'only' 12 marks to be awarded)
- Provide detail in a succinct and focused manner and build in clear and developed assessment or analysis to the relevant questions (2, 3(b), and 4) but avoid it elsewhere if it detracts from the demands of the question (1, 3(a)).
- Avoid simply repeating the content of the extract in 3(a), but clarify its meaning by expanding ideas raised and relating them to a wider context using detail, and scholarship where appropriate, whilst maintaining focus on the issues required from the passage as stated in the question
- Make clear and pertinent links to another paper they are studying in Question 4 as the question dictates or they will reach a ceiling at the top of Level 4.

Candidates and centres should be mindful that this year the synoptic element was dealt with in three ways in responses:

1. It was forgotten, not mentioned. So, the candidate even for an otherwise excellent answer was unable to reach Level 5. Candidates should take note that it is a vital and necessary part of this question.
2. Others nodded to the synoptic element. Some even flagged it up in capitals. But that was all, there was no development or explanation of how the NT (for example) connected and knitted in to this element of the debate. Nor was it sufficient to link symbols and the cross - that is part of Tillich's argument and not a synoptic connection made by the student to another component they have studied.
3. Where it was done well there was often (but not always) a conscious marker and then some detailed explanation of the connection. When this was done well, it was truly impressive.

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>

