



# Topic Tests

for AS and A Level Edexcel Religious Studies

*Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion*

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# Teacher's Introduction

These topic tests have been designed in order to test students' knowledge of the Edexcel paper 1 Philosophy of Religion specification:

1. Philosophical issues and questions
2. The nature and influence of religious experience
3. Problems of evil and suffering
4. Religious language
5. Works of scholars
6. Influences of developments in religious belief

## Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

There are 12 topic tests in this pack. See the diagnostic grid that follows for a breakdown of how the topics are covered.

An individual topic test should take a student roughly an hour to complete and can be completed either with supervision in the classroom or as homework. The tests are best undertaken once a student has worked through all the material in a specific part of the Philosophy of Religion syllabus and feels confident in beginning to apply their knowledge to both simple and complex questions.

Each test has several different question types that escalate in difficulty as the student progresses through the test. The beginning sections primarily feature basic factual questions and activities, with later sections featuring more difficult application questions, and finally exam-style questions, which ask the student to give **part of** an exam-style answer or a plan. The exam-style questions can be completed in full as additional revision and exam preparation later on; students should not attempt to answer them in full as part of the topic test.

There are 40 marks available for each test, with a minimum of 25% of marks allocated to the exam-style questions. They have been designed to reflect the different types of AO1 and AO2 questions students will encounter in their end-of-year exams. The allocation or proportion of AO1 and AO2 marks for these questions is given in the mark schemes and students are given helpful prompts before the questions so that they can understand the depth of knowledge and analysis they should be providing in their answers.

Finally, a diagnostic grid has been provided in order to help teachers and students assess their work. One of the key uses of the topic tests is to allow teachers and students to effectively diagnose strengths and weaknesses in an area, allowing them to identify where further work or help is needed. However, the tests can also be useful for revision and consolidation of knowledge, with the exam-style questions in particular being useful for building confidence ahead of completing practice papers.

*June 2025*

# Diagnostic Grid

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1. PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES AND QUESTIONS	
Topic Test: 1.1 The Design Argument	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
Topic Test: 1.2 The Cosmological Argument	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
Topic Test: 1.3 The Ontological Argument	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
2. THE NATURE AND INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE	
Topic Test: 2.1 The Nature of Religious Experience	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
Topic Test: 2.2 The Influence of Religious Experience as an Argument	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
3. PROBLEMS OF EVIL AND SUFFERING	
Topic Test: 3.1 and 3.2 The Problem of Evil and Suffering, Theodicies and Solutions	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:

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4. RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE	
Topic Test: 4.1 Analogy and Symbol	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
Topic Test: 4.2 Verification and Falsification	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
Topic Test: 4.3 Language Games	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
5. WORKS OF SCHOLARS	
Topic Test: 5.1 and 5.2 Context to Critiques of Religious Belief and a Comparison Between Russell and Copleston	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
6. INFLUENCE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF	
Topic Test: 6.1 and 6.2 Life after Death	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:
Topic Test: 6.3 Religion and Science Debates	Strengths:
Total Marks:	Weaknesses:

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## Topic Test 1.2: The Cosmological

- 1.1 Complete the missing premises and conclusions in the simplified versions of the arguments given below:

### **Aquinas's Second Way**

- P1. We can observe in nature a series of efficient causes.
- P2.
- P3. It is impossible for a chain of efficient causes to be infinite.
- C1.

- 1.2 What does Aquinas mean here by 'efficient cause'?

- 1.3 Why does Aquinas believe there cannot be an infinite chain of efficient causes?

- 1.4 How does the Kalam cosmological argument change and/or update Aquinas's Second Way?

- 2.1 Complete the sentence below:

The principle of \_\_\_\_\_ was an idea made prominent by the philosopher Thomas Aquinas. It holds that everything must have an \_\_\_\_\_ for its existence. It has often been used as the foundation for the argument from \_\_\_\_\_ for the existence of God.

- 2.2 What does 'contingency' mean in the context of this form of the cosmological argument?

- 2.3 Why does Aquinas argue in his fifth way that a series of contingent beings requires a necessary being?

- 2.4 Describe the correct fallacy that fits the argument below:

Hume and Russell criticised the argument from contingency for assuming that what is true of the parts of the universe must also be true of the whole universe. Just because the various parts have a reason or an explanation for their existence does not mean the universe as a whole has one.

- 2.5 Why does Immanuel Kant (alongside Hume) criticise the validity of talking about the cause of the universe?

- 2.6 Bertrand Russell went further and described the universe as a 'brute fact'. How does this undermine the argument from contingency?

- 3.1 Why does Hume argue that the causal principle is not a logical truth?

- 3.2 Why, if Hume is correct, does this undermine the conclusion of Aquinas's second way (and other cosmological arguments based on the causal principle)?

- 3.3 Why might critics of the causal argument be undermined by arguments against the possibility of an infinite regress of causes? Write a brief paragraph outlining and explaining your answer.

### **4.1 EXAM-STYLE QUESTION**

Evaluate the claim that the existence of the universe can only be explained through the existence of God.

*This question is similar in style to the 30-mark questions you may encounter in your exam. These require you not just demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the topic, but also to evaluate it. They also require you to include how developments in Philosophy have influenced by one of the following, which will form part of your answer.*

*Religion and Ethics*

*New Testament Studies*

*The Study of Philosophy*

For this question, draw up an essay plan that presents an argument supporting or refuting the claim given above. You must have an introduction, a conclusion, three arguments in support of your position, and three criticisms of your position that you would aim to respond to.

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## **Preview of Questions Ends Here**

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This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of questions ends here to avoid students previewing questions before they are set. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.

# Mark Scheme

## Mark Scheme 1.1: The Design Argument

**1.1 3 marks** 1 mark for each correctly identified form of philosophical reasoning.

**Sample:** Inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, abductive reasoning / inference to the best explanation.

**2.1 2 marks** Accurate explanation of why Paley's design argument can be interpreted as an analogy.

**Sample:** Paley draws a comparison between a person finding and observing a watch vs a stone. From this comparison, Paley can be held to argue that the world is more analogous to a watch, than it is a rock. If this analogy is correct, then it can be fairly said, like the watch, that the world must have a designer.

**2.2 2 marks** 1 mark for each correct identification of a property of design Paley refers to.

**Sample:** Paley refers to a number of properties of design. These include the two key properties of **functional order** and **complexity**.

**2.3 2 marks** Accurate explanation for why Paley's design argument might be based on analogy rather than analogy or inductive reasoning.

**Sample:** Paley's comparison of the universe to a watch is not intended to say that the universe is a watch. It is intended to illustrate that the two have shared properties of a functional order and complexity. The best explanation is a designer. Thus, Paley is possibly using abductive, not analogous, reasoning.

**3.1 2 marks** An accurate explanation of the problem of anthropomorphism as outlined by Hume.

**Sample:** Hume argues that proponents of the design argument project the human characteristics onto a designer that does not necessarily possess it. In particular, this poses problems for inferring the existence of a designer such as the Christian God. Even if the universe does exhibit design, it is not necessarily the work of a specific being who created it. It could be a series of designers or an imperfect designer.

**3.2 4 marks** 2 marks for each valid critique of design and order as given by Hume.

**Sample:**

Hume argues that the design argument does not work as an argument from analogy. Although the universe exhibits some functional order and complexity, the same cannot be said for the universe as a whole. It is not a logically valid move to argue that because a small part of the universe appears to have design, the whole should exhibit similar properties of design.

Hume also argues that the argument fails because human beings have no experience of other worlds (in comparison to machines and other objects). What might look like design simply might be a natural occurrence in the universe or even an unusual occurrence. Thus, without such experience, one cannot draw conclusions about whether the universe must actually have a designer or not.

**4.1 3 marks** Accurate explanation for why the theory of evolution poses a problem for the design argument.

**Sample:** Arguments from design often assert that living organisms are an example of design, since they exhibit functional order and complexity. However, the theory of evolution shows that this apparent design is only organisms adapting to what helps them survive in a changing environment. Thus, evolution undermines basic claims of design by opening up the possibility that any appearance of design is a natural, fundamental and random process.

**4.2 (i.) 2 marks** Accurate description of Swinburne's criticism of Paley's reliance on design.

**Sample:** Swinburne agrees with the basis of Paley's design argument but holds that Paley's argument is flawed. Design, based on regularities of co-presence (or spatial order). Any observation of such order could be originating from chance or a principle such as evolution, which is random to a significant degree. Thus, design is not as effective as a basis for inferring that a universe displaying spatial order must have a designer.

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4.2 (ii.)	2 marks	Accurate explanation of why Swinburne instead examines design 'regularities of succession' in nature.
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**Sample:** ii. Swinburne argues instead that design arguments should be based on observing the regular behaviour of things according to natural laws. This 'temporal order' is much more reliable than inferences about design, because it is difficult to ascribe to chance and scientific principles only when they are based on such order existing. Examples of regularities of succession are things such as the uniform and unchanging nature of the laws of physics. A kind of useful 'fine-tuning' order to use as a foundation for design.

4.2 (iii.)	2 marks	Accurate explanation of why Swinburne believes that regularities of succession are due to a designer rather than to more foundational scientific principles.
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**Sample:** Swinburne argues that in the absence of a scientific explanation, it is justifiable to explain otherwise inexplicable phenomena. In the case of regularities of succession, there is no explanation since they underwrite scientific theories. Thus it is fair to seek a personal explanation since they create and sustain that temporal order of the universe.

4.3	4 marks	2 marks for each relevant and accurate argument for and against the design argument.
	2 marks	1 mark for each argument displaying coherency, logical chains of reasoning and technical terminology.

**Sample:** One argument in favour of a deistic interpretation to the design argument is that it avoids problems with anthropomorphism. Under deism, it is not required that God has a personal nature. Instead, it can simply be asserted that there must be some ultimate power capable of creating the universe, one that does not necessarily possess any human characteristics.

An argument against a deistic interpretation is that as a response to challenges facing theism, it is vague. If there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the order and complexity of the universe is due to a designer, then such a designer is deistic is just admitting that there could be any possible cause of the universe. It could take many different shapes or forms. In this respect, deism isn't a particularly strong design argument.

### Exam-style Question

3 marks (AO1)	1 mark for each relevant and accurate strength of the design argument.
3 marks (AO1)	1 mark for each relevant and accurate weakness of the design argument.
1 mark (AO2)	A good balance of relevant strengths and weaknesses given in this section.
2 marks (AO2)	A detailed and well-presented assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, leading to a judgement made on the overall probable existence of God based on the evidence.
1 mark (AO2)	Overall coherency and consistency between the strengths and weaknesses.

Students may prepare a variety of explanations in their answers which draw upon both the strengths and weaknesses of the design argument. The examples given below are intended to be small samples of broader perspectives that students may develop in their plan.

#### Strengths of the design argument:

- It can explain the appearance of properties of functional order and complexity that are found in the universe. Such order and complexity can form the basis of a cumulative case for the existence of a designer.
- A range of different arguments can be proposed with different strengths. In particular, the argument from temporal order or cosmological constant is difficult to refute on the basis of scientific evidence.
- Science does not provide a convincing argument for the order in the universe because it is based on naturalistic assumptions. It is thus justifiable to assume a different kind of cause for the formation of the order in the universe.

#### Weaknesses of the design argument:

- The design argument often commits anthropomorphism in assuming that the designer must have had a particular type of designer, i.e. the Christian God. A range of possible causes for the order and complexity seen in the universe, many of which are equally as probable as a designer.
- It is possible to observe as much disorder or chaos in the universe as order. Design is not inherent in the universe but something seen by human beings, whose perception is very limited. The cumulative, probable case for God on the basis of a subjective property.
- Human beings have no real experience of universe creation and what little knowledge they have is from science. It is thus more probable that science continues to find explanations for the order in the universe than it is that evidence for a designer will continue to accumulate.

## **Preview of Answers Ends Here**

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This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of answers ends here to stop students looking up answers to their assessments. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.