



Exam Preparation Pack

Component 1A: Philosophy of Religion and Ethics

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Teacher's Introduction

This exam guide is for students, and teachers of AS and A Level students, studying the AS and A Level AQA Religious Studies syllabus and who wish to sit the exam in June 2017 onwards.

A Level Religious Studies consists of two components: Component 1: Philosophy of Religion and Ethics and Component 2: Study of Religion and Dialogues. This exam guide will focus on Component 1 only, Philosophy of Religion.

This guide includes an outline of the specification as provided by AQA, exam tips, mark schemes and sample/practice questions and answers. There will be answers from different bands for both the AS and A Level on all topics mentioned in the specification. Those answers that would not score full marks will have comments explaining why they were not awarded full marks.

This guide covers Section A, as listed below; Section B is covered in a separate resource.

Section A: Philosophy of Religion

- A. Arguments for the Existence of God
- B. Evil and Suffering
- C. Religious Experience
- D. Verifying Religious Experience

AS Level ends here

A Level also includes:

- E. Religious Language
- F. Miracles
- G. Self, Death and the Afterlife

Remember!

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

This exam guide will provide some answers to possible exam questions on all topics. AS Level and A Level will be covered under each topic in order to show how much more developed an answer has to be for A Level than for AS Level.

Obviously, this exam guide does not contain every possible question or answer. The questions and answers are meant as a guide only.

The best way to use this guide is to look at a proposed question and try to answer it, and then check your answer against the mark scheme and answers provided in this guide. This is one of the activities suggested at the beginning of each section.

This guide should not be used as the only resource for preparing for the exam. Students should have studied the material first. This guide will then provide students and teachers with extra support on how to help structure answers, and on what to include and what not to include.

Teachers can also create practice papers by mixing and matching questions from different sections. The answers can then be marked using the mark scheme and model answers.

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* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

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The specification

Students will be examined on the contents of the AQA specification. For full details

- <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-a-level>

Here is a brief overview:

Philosophy of Religion

- Arguments for the Existence of God
- Evil and Suffering
- Religious Experience
- Verification of Religious Experience

The full A Level also requires students to know:

- Religious Language
- Miracles
- Self, Death and the Afterlife

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The exam

AS Level

Some centres enter their students for the AS exam. The AS exam for Component 1 (Philosophy of Religion) is two hours long. This is 67% of the total AS grade.

Students should answer all questions, which consist of:

- two full questions on philosophy of religion, each consisting of a 'Part a' and a 'Part b'. So there will be:
 - 2 × Part a 15-mark questions on the philosophy of religion
 - 2 × Part b 15-mark questions on the philosophy of religion
- two full questions on ethics, consisting of a 'Part a' and a 'Part b' for a total of 10 marks. So there will be:
 - 2 × Part a 15-mark questions on ethics
 - 2 × Part b 15-mark questions on ethics

The whole paper is worth a total of 120 marks.

This means that students should not spend more than 15 minutes on each question.

A Level

The exam for A Level Religious Studies, Component 1 (Philosophy of Religion and Ethics) is two hours long. This is 50% of the A Level grade.

Students should answer all questions, which consist of:

- two full questions on philosophy of religion, each consisting of a 'Part a' and a 'Part b'. So there will be:
 - 2 × Part a 10-mark questions on the philosophy of religion
 - 2 × Part b 15-mark questions on the philosophy of religion
- two full questions on ethics, consisting of a 'Part a' and a 'Part b' with a total of 10 marks. So there will be:
 - 2 × Part a 10-mark questions on ethics
 - 2 × Part b 15-mark questions on ethics

The whole paper is worth a total of 100 marks.

This means that students should spend 18 minutes on each 10-mark question and 20 minutes on each 15-mark question.

This is an exact breakdown. Students may prefer to spend 20 minutes on each 10-mark question and 20 minutes on each 15-mark question.

Questions come in pairs – Part a and Part b – so the whole question is a total of 25 marks.

For both the AS and A Level papers, there are questions testing knowledge and understanding (Assessment Objective 1, or AO1). These will be the first questions (Part a). In the AS exam, these are worth 15 marks each, whereas for the A Level paper, these are worth 10 marks each.

There will also be questions testing analysis and evaluation (Assessment Objective 2, or AO2). These will be the second questions (Part b). In both the AS and A Level exam, these are worth 15 marks each.

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Tips

Here follow some invaluable tips on how to pass the exam. Some of these tips may be more important to remember than others.

1. Students should think carefully about the question, and briefly plan their answer.
2. Students should remember to read the question carefully, and to answer the question asked.
3. Students should make sure their answer is clear. This means that they must make sense. They will not reach the top bands if their answer contains unclear points that have not been explained or explained properly.
4. Students should avoid repetition. So do not repeat points; they will not get extra marks for this.
5. Students should read through their answers when they have finished in order to check for inconsistencies, repetition, unclear sections and underdevelopment.
6. Students need to explain everything; they should not leave the examiner to guess what they mean or to try to understand a concept or theory.

Further tips relevant to the specific questions will be given in the appropriate question.

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Mark Schemes

Examiners will be using a general mark scheme to mark the candidate's answer and expect for a specific answer. These can be viewed on the AQA website

- <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-A-Level/religious-resources>
- <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-A-Level/religious-resources>

The following tables show you an idea of which kinds of answers get awarded

AS Level: resources that answer AO1 questions (the Part a questions)

Level	Marks band	What type of answer
5	13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student answers the question comprehensively • An answer that is completely correct, relevant and • There is a lot of detail, with good examples and references to texts • The answer is clear and makes sense • Specialist terminology is used well
4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student mainly answers the question • An answer that is predominantly correct, relevant and • There are good examples and references to texts • The answer is mainly clear and makes sense • Specialist terminology is used well
3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student mainly answers the question • An answer that has a lot that is correct and relevant • There are some examples and references to texts • The answer is quite clear and makes some sense • Specialist terminology is used
2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student partially answers the question • A narrow answer which shows some knowledge and • There are few examples and references to texts to illustrate • The answer is relatively clear and makes some sense • Some specialist terminology is used
1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The answer shows some lower-level knowledge and • It points that are relevant or correct • Most of the answer is incorrect, unclear or underdeveloped • Specialist terminology is very rarely mentioned
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing worthy of credit

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AS Level: responses that answer AO2 questions (the Part b questions)

Level	Marks band	What type of answer
5	13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An answer that is logically assessed, with detailed evaluation of different perspectives There are good examples, evidence or textual references The answer is clear and makes sense Specialist terminology is used well
4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different sides of the argument are presented, with some evaluation based on some of the points made Some logical assessment is made There are examples, evidence or textual references to points made The answer is mainly clear and makes sense Specialist terminology is used well
3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different sides of the argument are considered, with some evidence or textual references The answer has a lot that is correct and relevant The answer is usually clear and makes some sense Specialist terminology is used
2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A relevant but limited answer that is one-sided There are examples, evidence or textual references; one point is made clearly The answer is quite clear and makes some sense Some specialist terminology is used
1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an answer to the question, but it is one-sided Most of the answer is inaccurate or irrelevant, and some is barely mentioned
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit

A Level: responses that answer AO1 questions (the Part a questions)

Level	Marks band	What type of answer
5	9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student answers the question comprehensively An answer that is completely correct, relevant and accurate There is critical analysis, and different views are recognised There is a lot of detail, with good examples and references to philosophers/theologians The answer is clear and makes sense Specialist terminology is used well
4	7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student mainly answers the question An answer that is predominantly correct, relevant and accurate There is critical analysis There are good examples and references to texts and references to philosophers/theologians Diverse views are acknowledged The answer is mainly clear and makes sense Specialist terminology is used well

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Level	Marks band	What type of answer
3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student usually answers the question An answer that has a lot that is correct and relevant There are some examples and references to texts and some references to philosophers/theologians There is some critical analysis and some knowledge The answer is quite clear and makes some sense Specialist terminology is used
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student partially answers the question A narrow answer which shows some knowledge and reference to alternative positions, but there are few texts to illustrate points made Limited mention of philosophers/theologians The answer is relatively clear and makes some sense Some specialist terminology is used
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The answer shows some lower-level knowledge and points that are relevant or correct There is some reference to alternative positions, but incorrect, unclear or underdeveloped and lacks critical analysis Specialist terminology is very rarely mentioned
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing worthy of credit

A Level: responses that answer AO2 questions (the Part b questions)

Level	Marks band	What type of answer
5	13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An answer that is logically assessed, with detailed evaluation of different perspectives There are good examples, evidence or textual references The answer shows clarity and insightful discussion There is critical analysis, and specialist terminology is used well
4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different sides of the argument are presented, with evaluation based on the points made Some logical assessment is made There are examples, evidence or textual references of the points made The answer is mainly clear and contains some critical analysis Specialist terminology is used well
3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different sides of the argument are considered, with some evaluation or textual references The answer has a lot that is correct and relevant The answer is mainly clear, and specialist terminology is used
2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A relevant but limited answer that is one-sided There are some examples, evidence or textual references One point is made clearly The answer is usually clear and uses some specialist terminology
1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an answer to the question, but it is one-sided Most of the answer is inaccurate or irrelevant, and specialist terminology is rarely mentioned
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing worthy of credit

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A. Arguments for the Existence of God

This section provides some responses relating to questions on the arguments for the existence of God. Students need to know the following arguments and their criticisms:

- The design argument (Paley) and criticisms presented by Hume
- The ontological argument (Anselm) and criticisms presented by Gaunilo and Kant
- The cosmological argument (Aquinas) and criticisms presented by Hume and Kant

Students are expected to show the strengths and criticisms of these arguments, whether the argument is inductive or deductive, what kind of proof is used, and whether they rely on experience. These aspects will be tested in both the AO1 and AO2 questions.



AS Level questions and answers

Typical 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) include:

1. Explain Paley's analogical argument and two of Hume's criticisms that are presented.
2. Explain how Anselm proves the existence of God and how Gaunilo responds to this.
3. Give a detailed account of Aquinas' arguments, from contingency and necessity.
4. Explain the differences between the design argument and the ontological argument.

These questions require a detailed outline of the theory/theories. Remember to structure your answer as follows:

- POINT – for example: 'The design argument is an inductive argument...'
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S) – for example: 'Paley's version of the design argument...'
- EXPLANATION of the relevance of the evidence / example(s) / textual reference(s). For example: 'Paley's argument is that the complexity of the world is the result of watchmakers who designed it; similarly, we can infer that the parts in the world that it must have been designed and that God is the designer of the world...'

There can be a conclusion, but this will usually take the form of a summary of the points made.



Typical 15-mark questions for AO2 (these will be the Part b questions) include:

5. 'The strengths of the design argument outweigh the weaknesses.' Discuss this statement.
6. 'Kant's response to Anselm's ontological argument is stronger than Gaunilo's response to Anselm's argument.'
7. Assess the strength of the cosmological argument.
8. 'The design argument is more convincing than the ontological argument.'

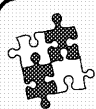
These questions require two sides of an argument, followed by a conclusion. Therefore, your answer should follow the format:

- POINT – for example: 'It could be argued that the design argument is a strong argument for the existence of God.'
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S) – for example: 'Paley's version of the design argument that makes sense...'
- EXPLANATION of how the evidence / example(s) / textual references illustrate the point. For example: 'Paley's watch analogy shows the order and purpose in the universe point to the existence of God.'
- LINK – for example: 'This shows how the design argument is a strong argument for the existence of God.'



There must be a conclusion which answers the question and follows from the points made.

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Student activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answers. Their answers will then be compared to what has been written in this guide.

Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. Comments at the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following to improve their exam skills:



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band. If there is anything missing in the answer. If there is, mark the next band down. If there is nothing missing, move to the band below that, and so on. The marks awarded and comments are shown in the answers in this section on the right.

1. Explain Paley's analogical argument and two of Hume's criticisms that are relevant to the design argument.

Example 1:

Paley's analogical argument is a version of the design argument. It is analogous to the world to man-made objects. Paley starts his design argument by describing a heath, where he comes across a stone. He is not surprised by the stone being there. The stone has no order and purpose. Then he comes across a watch, which does need an explanation for its existence. The watch has order and purpose because all the parts fit together for a purpose. That order and purpose are the result of someone designing the watch: a watchmaker. Paley then argues that if we see things in the world that show order and purpose, we can infer from that that there is a designer. The eye (its iris, retina, lens, etc.) fit together in an orderly and planned fashion of great complexity, and for the purpose of sight. The eye is much more like a watch than a stone. The result of watchmakers who designed them; similarly, we can infer from the world that it must have been designed and that God is the designer that designed the world.

Hume criticises the design argument. Paley's design argument is an analogy between parts, and man-made objects. Hume claims that the analogy is not a good one. It is exaggerated. For example, we can take parts of the universe, such as the human eye, and say the same of the whole universe. We do not know what the universe has any purpose. He also thought that it would be better to compare the universe to a vegetable, rather than something mechanical, like a watch.

Hume also questions whether Paley's design argument proves the existence of God. There could be many gods, all playing a part in the design of the world. Or the world was made the world as a 'practice' and then got rid of it. The fact that the world is suffering, suggests that it could very well be a practice world.

Example 2:

A design argument is an argument that looks at the design of the world and argues that God must exist because he designed the world.

Paley starts his design argument by describing himself walking along a heath and finding a stone. He does not think about the stone. Then he walks a bit further and finds a watch. He wonders why the watch is there. It does need an explanation for why it is there. The watch has order and purpose. The purpose is to tell the time. The watch is so well designed so the world is like a watch. The world must have been designed by God. This proves God must exist.

Hume criticises the design argument. We cannot say the whole universe is like a watch. Hume also thinks there could be many gods or an apprentice god.

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2. Explain how Anselm proves the existence of God and how Gaunilo responds

Example 1

Anselm proves that God exists using the ontological argument.

Anselm was the first to put forward an ontological argument. Anselm defines God as 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. He then argues that if God is supremely perfect, he must exist in reality otherwise he would not be supremely perfect. Therefore, God exists in reality.

Gaunilo criticised this by using the example of a perfect island. I can imagine it is perfect but it doesn't exist. This does not make sense. Therefore, Anselm's ontological argument doesn't work according to Gaunilo.

Example 2

The first version of the ontological argument was put forward by Anselm in *Proslogian*. Anselm wants to prove that the 'Fool' in the Psalms (Bible) who says 'There is no God' is saying something that is a logical contradiction. The reason why Anselm thinks this is that if you understand the definition of God, you must also understand that he exists.

Anselm defines God as 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. He then argues that if God is 'that than which no greater can be conceived' he must exist in reality as well as in the mind. If God only existed in the mind, that which did exist in reality would be greater than him. Therefore, God who is 'that than which no greater can be conceived' exists in reality.

Gaunilo, a contemporary of Anselm, criticised this by writing 'On Behalf of a Fool'. He applies Anselm's reasoning to the example of a perfect island. We can make anything exist through the imagination. For example, we can imagine a perfect island and because it is only in the mind, it would be perfect. The problem is that there is no perfect island in existence. Therefore, Anselm's argument doesn't work in proving God's existence either.

3. Give a detailed account of Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity

Example 1

Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity is a version of the cosmological argument. It is an a posteriori (after experience) argument because it relies on our experience of the universe. It also focuses on the non-temporal cause (cause *in esse*) which looks at the reason why something is still in existence – for instance, I am constantly pumping blood around my body. In these cosmological arguments, the universe's continued existence is explained by a necessary being.

Aquinas gave five ways to prove the existence of God. Three of the five ways are versions of the cosmological argument. Aquinas' first way is known as the argument from contingency. It states that everything in the universe exists contingently. This means they have a beginning and an end. If everything is contingent, then at some time nothing would have existed. The problem is that if nothing existed then nothing could exist now. Obviously, things do exist and so there has to be an independent and necessary being that exists and doesn't need other things to exist. That being is God. God is the cause of all contingent beings. This way is non-temporal as it focuses on God as a necessary being and not as a cause in time for the universe's existence.

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Example 2

Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity is a version of the cosmological argument for the existence of God.

Aquinas' third way is known as the argument from contingency and necessity. It states that if the universe exists contingently, then there must have been a time when nothing existed. The problem is that if nothing existed, then nothing could then begin to exist and so there has to be an independent and necessary being. That being is responsible for all contingent beings.

4. Explain the differences between the design argument and the ontological argument.

Example 1

The design argument is an a posteriori (after experience) inductive argument based on experience of things in the world to produce a conclusion which is not certain. An example of a design argument is Paley's analogical argument, which aims to show that the universe is designed. Paley argues that, while walking, you would not be surprised if you came across a watch. You would need an explanation, but you would if you saw a watch because this does not exist in nature. The watch has order and purpose because all the parts fit together in a certain way. That order and purpose are the result of someone designing the watch. Paley gives the example of the parts of an eye (its iris, retina, lens, etc.) fit together in an orderly and planned way, harmoniously, with great complexity, and for the purpose of sight. The eye is more complex than a stone. Watches are the result of watchmaking, and so the universe must have been designed and created. The conclusion is probable but not certain because it is based on evidence of the designer so far.

Ontological arguments are a different kind of argument. They are based on reasoning in the form of a deductive argument. Ontological arguments start from a definition of God and conclude that God exists. The first version of this was given by Anselm in *Proslogian*. Anselm wants to prove that saying 'there is no God' is contradictory. The reason why Anselm thinks this is because once you understand the definition of God, you understand that he exists. Anselm defines God as 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. He argues that if God is 'that than which no greater can be conceived' he must exist in reality, otherwise something that did exist in reality would be greater than God. Therefore, 'that than which no greater can be conceived' exists in reality. The conclusion of the argument is true if the premises (the definition of God, for example) are true.

Overall, design arguments are a posteriori inductive arguments that reach a conclusion based on evidence. These arguments do not prove anything about the world and prove that the universe is designed. Ontological arguments are a priori deductive arguments that reach a certain conclusion based on reasoning. The God of ontological arguments is supreme and eternal.

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Example 2

Design arguments are inductive arguments based on experience. An example is Paley's watch analogy. Paley compares parts of the world to a watch and concludes that the world must be designed and that designer is God.

Ontological arguments are deductive arguments. Anselm gave an ontological argument for the existence of God, defining God as supremely perfect. To be supremely perfect, God must exist in reality as well as in the mind. This proves God exists.

5. 'The strengths of the design argument outweigh the weaknesses.' Discuss this statement.

Example 1

The design argument as presented by Paley can be considered a strong argument for the existence of God. Paley recognises that there is order and purpose in the universe. Parts of the universe, such as a flower, show purpose, and anything that has a purpose is usually designed. The regularity, such as the rotation of the planets. Such order has to have been designed because it is unlikely to have happened by chance. This shows how the design argument is a strong argument because the parts of the world and the universe itself, must have a designer and that designer must be a great designer to have designed this universe. The only person capable of this work is God.

However, the criticisms Hume makes do seem convincing as well. The universe could have formed by chance. It might not necessarily have been designed but have coincidentally started to bind and form order. It is quite possible that if the world was designed, it might not be perfect. We cannot tell from the design who the designer is. If we could, then we would know the designer is not perfect because the world is not perfect. These arguments show how weak the design argument is.

In conclusion, the strengths of the design argument do not outweigh the weaknesses. Some of the criticisms made by Hume and others are convincing points by showing that there may not necessarily be a designer. The design argument can't be used to prove the existence of the classical God of Christianity.

Example 2

The design argument as presented by Paley can be considered a strong argument for the existence of God. Paley recognises that there is order and purpose in the universe. Parts of the universe, such as a flower, show purpose, and anything that has a purpose is usually designed. The regularity, such as the rotation of the planets. Such order has to have been designed because it is unlikely to have happened by chance. This shows how the design argument is a strong argument because the parts of the world and the universe itself, must have a designer and that designer must be a great designer to have designed this universe. The only person capable of this work is God.

In conclusion, the design argument is a very strong argument proving the existence of God.

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6. 'Kant's response to Anselm's ontological argument is stronger than Gaunilo's'

Example 1

Gaunilo's response to Anselm's ontological argument is that the logic that Anselm uses is flawed. Defining something as perfect does not mean it must exist. This is a fallacy.

Kant's argument is stronger. He argues that existence is not a property of something.

In conclusion, Kant's criticism is stronger than Gaunilo's criticism.

Example 2

Gaunilo's response to Anselm's ontological is a strong argument. He argues that if we can define something as perfect, then we could bring anything into existence, including Gaunilo's ex nihilo. This seems to be a very good point.

However, Anselm was aware of this when he pointed out God has a different status to contingent things in the world, like islands, when he clarified that God has no beginning or end. Kant's criticism responds to this aspect of Anselm's argument when he says that existence is not a property of something. You cannot add existence onto a number of properties. Either it exists or it doesn't. If it exists then it belongs to the category of things that exist, like pens, teachers, etc. If it does not exist then it belongs to the category of things that do not exist, like unicorns or moonflowers.

In conclusion, Kant's response to Anselm's ontological argument is stronger than Gaunilo's. It is difficult to imagine Anselm being able to respond to Gaunilo's argument.

7. Assess the strength of the cosmological argument. (15)

Example 1

The cosmological argument from contingency and necessity as presented by Aquinas is a strong argument. It proves that God exists as the necessary being responsible for the existence of everything in and out of existence. It makes sense to have a being that has always existed and is not contingent beings, otherwise you end up with the cause being nothing. Not all contingent beings, therefore, provides reasons, based on a posteriori evidence, by something else, that can support the faith a person may already have in God.

However, it is quite possible that the universe 'just is' and doesn't need a cause. Hume, before him, argued. Things in the universe are contingent and do not mean the universe as a whole has a cause. Russell gave the example of a tree. The universe as a whole does not have a mother. The universe does not have to be caused. It is argued that applying the concept of necessity to God does not make sense. Truths such as $1 + 1 = 2$ are not the same as mathematical equations.

In conclusion, it does seem that Hume and Russell have some very strong arguments against the cosmological argument. However, it does not make sense to think that the universe had a beginning. Even science thinks the universe had a beginning in the form of the Big Bang could be a necessary being like God and so the cosmological argument can prove the existence of God.

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Example 2

Aquinas' last way is known as contingency, which states that everything in the world exists contingently. This means they depend on other things for their existence. The world is not self-sufficient and has a beginning and an end. This means there was a time where nothing existed, but nothing began to exist, so there must have been an independent and necessary being, God. Bertrand Russell claims that the universe's existence does not need an explanation and can be accepted as a brute fact. However, Copleston is in support of the cosmological argument claiming that 'if one refuses to sit down at the chessboard and make a move, one is checkmated'.

In conclusion, the cosmological argument is a strong argument for the existence of God.

8. 'The design argument is more convincing than the ontological argument.' Analyse and evaluate this claim.**Example 1**

The design argument is more convincing than the ontological argument. The design argument is based on empirical evidence, whereas the ontological argument is just about logic. It tells us nothing about the world, whereas the design argument looks at things that are designed in the world and compares them to things that also appear designed. The argument then infers that the world must have a designer and that designer is God.

The ontological argument argues that because God is defined as the most perfect being, God must exist because existence is something the most perfect conceivable being would have. If God wouldn't be the most perfect conceivable being, then God is not something as perfect as he is defined to be. Therefore, that thing into existence.

In conclusion, the design argument is stronger than the ontological argument.

Example 2

The ontological argument is a strong argument for the existence of God because it is a deductive argument that uses the definition of God as the greatest conceivable being and from that deduces that God must exist, otherwise he wouldn't be the greatest conceivable being. The conclusions to deductive arguments must be true if the premises are true. The definition of God, therefore, must exist. This is strong because that is generally how deductive arguments work.

However, the cosmological argument is also a strong inductive argument, based on the evidence of the real world. Aquinas argues that God must exist as the necessary being responsible for all that exist in the world. Evidence suggests that everything has a cause and that the world of beings must be something that is necessary and has always existed. This is supported by empirical evidence and is easier to prove empirically.

In conclusion, both arguments have their strengths, but the ontological argument is stronger than the cosmological argument because the ontological argument does not provide any evidence, whereas the cosmological argument does. If we were able to see God, then we would be able to define him as the greatest conceivable being. The cosmological argument, on the other hand, is based on the evidence of contingent things going in and out of existence and always having a cause. If there is to be anything, there must be a necessary cause.

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Examiner's comments

1. Explain Paley's analogical argument and two of Hume's criticisms that are

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is completely correct, relevant and detailed, with good

Example 2:

5/15 – this answer lacks accuracy and development, which means that knowledge is limited. The answer has not understood Paley's watch analogy by comparing rather than stating that Paley does believe the world is designed but that is due to purpose. The watch analogy focuses on the purpose. The answer needed to be more detailed, so it has limited use of examples. Hume's criticisms need more detail and the two criticisms are merely listed.

2. Explain how Anselm proves the existence of God and how Gaunilo responds

Example 1:

8/15 – this answer is mainly correct but lacks detail that would show proper understanding. It needs to explain key concepts and arguments, such as a deductive argument. Examples are given, but because it does not give any background to Anselm's references are limited.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and accurate, demonstrating excellent knowledge

3. Give a detailed account of Aquinas' argument for contingency and necessity

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is detailed not only with regard to what type of argument contingency and necessity is, but also in explaining the steps to the argument. It is clear and beating. Specialist terminology is used throughout and the answer shows clear knowledge and understanding of this argument.

Example 2:

6/15 – this answer shows knowledge and understanding but they are limited. It uses terminology such as a posteriori. It does not explain key concepts such as necessity, therefore, not detailed enough.

4. Explain the differences between the design argument and the ontological argument

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and correct. It explains the type of argument, the steps to the argument and a version of that argument. The concluding paragraph sums up the differences.

Example 2:

6/15 – this answer is very brief and lacks detail. It does not really make it clear. To make it clear, the answer should have explained what an inductive argument is and why. The arguments themselves need to be more detailed. This is, therefore, not detailed enough.

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5. 'The strengths of the design argument outweigh the weaknesses.' Discuss

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer answers the question clearly, showing two sides of the argument and reaching a conclusion that follows from what has been written.

Example 2:

5/15 – this answer is one-sided. It gives only one side of the argument. The conclusion reached by evaluating different sides of the argument.

6. 'Kant's response to the ontological argument is stronger than Gaunilo's response to the ontological argument.' Discuss

Example 1:

3/15 – this answer is two-sided and has a conclusion, but it lacks examples and is not a basic answer.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and explains clearly what the two philosophers have said and links back to the question. The conclusion follows nicely from the previous paragraphs.

7. Assess the strength of the cosmological argument. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is clear and detailed, with a good conclusion that evaluates the argument further. It is possible to add extra evidence if the student thinks of some at the end of the conclusion, although it would have been ideal to add it in the first paragraph.

Example 2:

8/15 – this answer does have two sides of the argument but the argument against the argument again without evaluating the criticism that Russell gave. The evaluation is not clear.

8. 'The design argument is more convincing than the ontological argument.' Assess

Example 1:

6/15 – this answer does not give two sides of the argument. It argues through the design argument is stronger than the ontological argument. It does not look at whether the ontological argument is stronger in any way.

Example 2:

6/15 – this answer has not, in part, answered the question. The student has not clearly answered the question, and has argued about the cosmological argument and the ontological argument. However, there is some relevant material and so it is a level 2.

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A Level questions and answers

For A Level, the 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) be

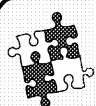
1. Examine how Anselm proves the existence of God and how Gaunilo responds.
2. Examine how Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity proves the existence of God.
3. Examine the effectiveness of the ontological argument and the design argument.

The answers to these questions are expected to be more critically developed and detailed than at AS Level.

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

4. 'The strengths of the design argument outweigh the weaknesses.' Discuss.
5. Assess the strength of the cosmological argument.
6. 'The design argument is more convincing than the ontological argument.'

A Level answers to these questions will show more insight and links to other material (e.g. through wider reading) than at AS Level.



Student activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answers. Their answers will then be compared to what has been written in this guide.

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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. Comments at the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following to improve their exam skills:



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band and see if there is anything missing in the answer. If there is, move to the next band down. If there is nothing missing, move to the band below that, and so on. The marks and comments are given in the answers in this section on the basis of the existence of God.

1. Exam question: Anselm proves the existence of God and how Gaunilo responds

Example 1

The ontological argument shows through deductive reasoning that God must exist. It is an a priori (before experience) argument in that it relies on reasoning alone and not on observation. The conclusion has to be true if the definition is correct.

The first version of this argument was put forward by Anselm in *Proslogion*. He says that the 'Fool' in the Psalms who says in his heart 'there is no God' is saying something that is a contradiction. The reason why Anselm thinks this is because once you understand that God exists, you must also understand that he exists. Anselm defines God as 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. He then argues that if God is 'that than which no greater can be conceived', he must exist in reality as well as in thought, otherwise something that did exist in reality but not in thought would be greater than him. Therefore, God who is 'that than which no greater can be conceived' exists in reality.

Gaunilo, a monk and contemporary of Anselm, criticised this by writing 'On the Proslution of Anselm's Argument'. He says that if we use Anselm's argument, we can make anything exist. For example, I can imagine a perfect island and because it is perfect, it must exist. Otherwise, it wouldn't be perfect. The problem is that there is no perfect island. In the same way, the argument doesn't work in proving God's existence either. Gaunilo's argument is a reductio ad absurdum, a deduction to prove God exists.

Anselm was aware of this difficulty to his argument and made the point that God's existence is necessary. God is very different from an island. An island is contingent; it relies on other things for its existence. God, on the other hand, has necessary existence. He does not rely on other things for his existence and has no beginning or end. This is why God is 'that than which no greater can be conceived'.

Example 2

The first version of the ontological argument was put forward by Anselm in *Proslogion*. Anselm wants to prove that the 'Fool' in the Psalms (Bible) who says 'there is no God' is saying something that is a logical contradiction. The reason why Anselm thinks this is because once you understand that God exists, you must also understand that he exists.

Anselm defines God as 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. He then argues that if God is 'that than which no greater can be conceived', he must exist in reality as well as in thought, otherwise something that did exist in reality but not in thought would be greater than him. Therefore, God who is 'that than which no greater can be conceived' exists in reality.

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Gaunilo, a contemporary of Anselm, criticised this by writing 'On Behalf of a Fool'. He applied Anselm's reasoning to anything we can make anything exist through the example of a perfect island. I can imagine a perfect island and because it is in my mind, it exists. If it otherwise it wouldn't be perfect. The problem is that there is no perfect island in reality. In the same way, the argument doesn't work in proving God's existence either.

2. Examine how Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity proves the existence of God

Example 1

Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity is a version of the cosmological argument. It is an a priori (before experience) argument because it relies on logic and reason to prove the existence of God. Three of the five ways are versions of this argument.

Aquinas' third way is known as the argument from contingency and necessity. It states that everything in the universe has a cause. There must have been a first cause, which is God. God does not have a cause and that cause is a necessary being. That being is God. God is the cause of all contingent beings.

Example 2

Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity is a version of the cosmological argument. It is an a posteriori (after experience) argument because it relies on observation and the universe. It also focuses on the non-temporal cause (cause in esse) and the effect (effect in fieri). It looks at the reason why something is still in existence. For instance, I am constantly pumping blood around my body. In the same way, the universe's continued existence is due to God.

Aquinas' third way is known as the argument from contingency and necessity. It states that everything in the universe exists contingently. This means they have a beginning and an end. If everything is contingent, then there must have been a time when nothing existed. The problem is that if nothing existed then nothing could exist now. Obviously, things do exist and so there has to be an independent and necessary being that exists and doesn't need other things to exist. That being is God. God is the cause of all contingent beings. This way is non-temporal as it focuses on God as a necessary being for the universe's existence.

3. Examine the effectiveness of the ontological argument and the design argument

Example 1

The design argument is an a posteriori (after experience) inductive argument based on experience of things in the world to produce a conclusion which is probable. An example of a design argument is Paley's analogical argument, which aims to show that the world is like a watch. Paley's argument is based on the stone being there while walking on the heath. He explains its existence. He does not need an explanation for why a watch exists because all the parts fit together for the purpose of telling time. The parts of the watch are the result of someone designing the watch: a watchmaker. Paley argues that the world that shows order and purpose. He gives the example of the human eye (iris, retina, lens, etc.) fit together in an orderly and planned fashion to function.

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complexity, and for the purpose of sight. The eye is much more like a watch than the result of watchmakers who designed them; similarly, we can infer from the complexity in the world that it must have been designed and that God is the designer. The conclusion is probable but not certain because it is based on evidence of this designer so far. If you need certainty then this is not a very effective argument.

Ontological arguments are a different kind of argument. They are based on reasoning in the form of a deductive argument. Ontological arguments start from that definition that God exists. Anselm defines God as 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. He then argues that if God is 'that than which no greater can be conceived' as well as in thought, otherwise something that did exist in him. Therefore, God who is 'that than which no greater can be conceived' is not only in thought but also in reality. To such a deductive argument is true if the premises (the definition of God, for example) are true. This kind of argument does produce certainty but it rests on a definition which has just been thought of.

Overall, design arguments are a posteriori inductive arguments that reach a conclusion based on evidence. These arguments do tell us something about the world and provide a basis for belief. Ontological arguments are a priori deductive arguments that reach a certain conclusion which is deemed to be necessarily true. The God of ontological arguments is supreme and eternal. There is no way of telling whether this definition is an accurate representation of God. The more effective argument is the inductive argument, which is based on reality.

Example 2

The design argument is an a posteriori (after experience) inductive argument based on experience of the world to produce a conclusion which is probable but not certain. An example of this argument is Paley's analogical argument, which aims to conclude that God exists. The conclusion is probable but not certain because it is based on evidence of this designer so far.

Ontological arguments are a different kind of argument. They are based on reasoning in the form of a deductive argument. Ontological arguments start from that definition they conclude that God exists. The conclusion to such an argument is true if the premises (the definition of God, for example) are true.

Overall, design arguments are a posteriori inductive arguments that reach a conclusion based on evidence. These arguments do tell us something about the world and provide a basis for belief. Ontological arguments are a priori deductive arguments that reach a certain conclusion which is deemed to be necessarily true. The God of ontological arguments is supreme and eternal.

4. 'The strengths of the design argument outweigh the weaknesses.' Discuss this statement.

Example 1

The design argument as presented by Paley can be considered a strong argument for the existence of God. Paley recognises that there is order and purpose in the universe. Parts of the universe show purpose, and anything that has a purpose is usually designed. The universe shows order, the rotation of the planets. Such order has to have been designed because it is not the result of chance. This shows how the design argument is a strong argument because it is based on evidence of this designer so far.

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parts of the world and the universe itself, must have a designer and that a designer to have designed this universe. The only person capable of this work

Hume argues that the universe might have happened by chance. It might be designed but have coincidentally come about as atoms/elements started to coalesce. It is also possible that, if the world was designed, the designer is not God. We cannot know if the designer is. If we could then the designer would not be perfect because the arguments show how weak the design argument is.

Example 2

The design argument as presented by Paley can be considered a strong argument for the existence of God. Paley recognises that there is order and purpose in the universe. Parts of the universe show purpose, and anything that has a purpose is usually designed. The uniformity of the rotation of the planets. Such order has to have been designed because it is not the result of chance. This shows how the design argument is a strong argument because it shows that parts of the world and the universe itself, must have a designer and that a designer to have designed this universe. The only person capable of this would be God.

However, the criticisms Hume makes do seem convincing as well. The universe might not necessarily have been designed but have coincidentally started to bind and form order. It is quite possible that, if the world was designed by God, we cannot tell from the design who the designer is. If we could, then the world would be perfect because the world is not perfect. These arguments show how weak

In conclusion, the strengths of the deistic argument do not outweigh the weaknesses. Some very convincing evidence shows that there may not necessarily be a God, and this may not be the God of Christianity. There is no way of telling from the deistic arguments like,

5. Assess the strength of the cosmological argument. (15)

Example 1

The cosmological argument from contingency and necessity as presented by Aquinas is a very strong argument. It proves that God exists as the necessary being responsible for all contingent beings in and out of existence. It makes sense to have a being that has always existed, otherwise you end up with the cause being nothing. No

However, it is quite possible that the universe 'just is' and doesn't need a cause. Hume, before him, argued. Things in the universe are contingent and do not mean the universe as a whole has a cause. I gave the example of a room. A room as a whole does not have a cause. The universe does not have to have a cause. He argued that applying the concept of necessary to God does not make sense. Truths such as 1 + 1 = 2. God is not the same as mathematical equations.

In conclusion, it does seem that Hume and Russell have some very strong cosmological argument. However, it does not make sense to think that the beginning. Even science thinks the universe had a beginning in the form of

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Big Bang could be a necessary being like God and so the cosmological argument prove the existence of God.

Example 2

Aquinas' last way is known as contingency, which states that everything in the world exists contingently. This means they depend on other things for their existence. The world is not self-sufficient. This means there was a time where nothing existed, but nothing began to exist, so there must have been a permanent and necessary being, God.

Bertrand Russell argued that the universe's existence does not need an explanation. It is a brute fact. However, Copleston, in support of the cosmological argument, claimed that 'if one refuses to sit down at the chessboard and make a move, one is checkmated'.

In conclusion, the cosmological argument is a strong argument for the existence of God.

6. 'The cosmological argument is more convincing than the ontological argument'

Example 1

The cosmological argument is a more convincing argument than the ontological argument because it does not rely on a definition as proof that God exists. The ontological argument assumes the existence of a supremely perfect being. There is no way of knowing whether this is the case.

The ontological argument does make logical sense, but it might be considered as a circular argument.

In conclusion, the cosmological argument is the best argument in proving the existence of God.

Example 2

The ontological argument is a strong argument for the existence of God because it is a deductive argument that uses the definition of God as the greatest conceivable being. The words 'that than which no greater can be conceived' – as the premise and conclusion. If God must exist, otherwise he wouldn't be the greatest conceivable being. The conclusion must be true if the premises are true. God, according to the definition, must exist. This is strong because that is generally how people define God.

However, the cosmological argument is also a strong inductive argument, based on the real world. Aquinas argues that God must exist as the necessary being responsible for everything that exists in the world. Evidence suggests that everything has a cause and the first cause must be something that is necessary and has always existed. This is a strong argument based on evidence and is easier to prove empirically.

In conclusion, both arguments have their strengths, but the ontological argument is more convincing because the ontological argument does not provide a way of knowing whether God exists. If we were able to see God, then we would be able to define him as the greatest conceivable being. The cosmological argument, on the other hand, is based on contingent things going in and out of existence and always having a cause. If there is to be anything, there must be a necessary cause.

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Examiner's comments

1. Examine how Anselm proves the existence of God and how Gaunilo responds

Example 1:

10/10 – this answer is not too dissimilar from Example 2 in the AS section. It is a good version of the ontological argument and an introductory paragraph explaining the argument, showing wider and more critical development.

Example 2:

8/10 – this answer is similar to Example 1 from the AS section. It is a good answer but what it does not do is explain the ontological argument is, which would have given it a higher grade.

2. Examine how Aquinas' argument from contingency and necessity proves the existence of God

Example 1:

2/10 – this answer has not explained the argument from contingency and necessity but has confused it slightly with the second argument (uncaused cause).

Example 2:

10/10 – this answer is the same answer as Example 1 from question 3 of the AS section. It is a good answer for AS and is an excellent answer for A Level. It has detail and critical evaluation that this argument looks for a non-temporal cause.

3. Examine the effectiveness of the ontological argument and the design argument

Example 1:

10/10 – this is a very detailed answer which has similar content to the Example 1 AS answer but has added how effective the argument can or cannot be effective in proving the existence of God.

Example 2:

4/10 – this answer is correct but lacks any examples of arguments that would be used to support the claim.

4. 'The strengths of the design argument outweigh the weaknesses.' Discuss

Example 1:

6/15 – this answer does have two sides of the argument but no conclusion, no evaluation. The second paragraph could be taken as the conclusion or answer but it is not at all clear.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is almost identical to the Example 1 AS answer to question 4. This answer has an extra sentence at the end which adds clarification. Had this answer been written for AS it would still have received a grade in this top level.

5. Assess the strength of the cosmological argument. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is the same as for AS question 7 and is also an excellent answer. It has two sides to the argument with reference to relevant scholars. The conclusion has been well argued, showing in-depth evaluation.

Example 2:

5/15 – this answer achieved 8/10 at AS Level but only 5/15 at A Level. It lacks detail and does not explain how they came to the conclusion. They needed to explain the argument by Copleston supporting the cosmological argument because Russell is avoiding the question.

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6. 'The design argument is more convincing than the ontological argument.' A

Example 1:

7/15 – this answer does present two views but no scholars are mentioned and an ontological argument makes logical sense have not been explained.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and all material is relevant to the question. It has an evaluative conclusion that follows logically from what has been written.



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B. Evil and Suffering

This section provides some responses relating to the problem of evil and suffering.

Students are expected to know and show:

- what is meant by natural evil and moral evil
- the logical aspects to the problem of evil and the evidence of evil in the world
- Hick's soul-making theodicy as a response to the problem of evil, and its strengths and weaknesses
- the free will defence as a response to the problem of evil, and its strengths and weaknesses
- the process theodicy (Griffin) as a response to the problem of evil, and its strengths and weaknesses

The specific theodicy does not mention the Augustinian or Irenaean theodicies but the connection with the above points.

AS Level questions and answers

Typical 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) include:

1. **Explain Hick's soul-making theodicy and the free will defence as possible explanations for evil and suffering in the world.**
2. **Outline and illustrate why the free will defence might be an explanation for evil and suffering in the world.**

These questions require a detailed outline of the theory/theories. Remember to structure your answer using the following format:

- POINT
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S)
- EXPLANATION

There can be a conclusion which will usually take the form of a summary of the theory/theories.

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

3. **'There are no convincing explanations for the problem of evil.' Assess this claim.**
4. **Assess whether the process theodicy is a convincing explanation for the problem of evil.**

These questions require two sides of an argument, followed by a conclusion. Therefore, in this question; this will have been done in the AO1 / Part a question. The purpose of the conclusion should follow the format:

- POINT
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S)
- EXPLANATION
- LINK

There must be a conclusion which answers the question and follows from the points made in the paragraphs.



Student activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answer in this guide, and then compare their answer to what has been written in this guide.

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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help develop their writing skills:



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band and see if there is anything missing in the answer. If there is, mark the next band down. If there is nothing missing, move to the band below that, and so on. The awarded marks and comments are shown in the answers in this section on the right.

1. Explain soul-making theodicy and the free will defence as possible solutions to the problem of evil in the world. (15)

Example 1

One argument that explains why there is evil in the world is Hick's soul-making theodicy. It suggests that the world is not yet perfect and must go through a process of soul-making involving trials and tribulations and evils in order to become perfect.

The free will defence suggests that evil is inevitable in the world if humans have free will, which is a valuable thing to have. It is better to live in a world where humans can exercise free will and make choices, than in a world where humans are like robots or puppets that have no free will. This is because free will allows humans to be good and do good deeds, which is a valuable thing to have.

Example 2

One argument that explains why there is evil in the world is Hick's soul-making theodicy. It suggests that the world is not yet perfect and must go through a process of soul-making involving trials and tribulations and evils in order to become perfect. This argument is based on the idea that suffering and evil are necessary for soul-making. Hick also argues that humans are created in the image of God, but they are not yet perfect and must go through a process of soul-making involving suffering and evils in order to become perfect. This explains why there is evil in the world to test us.

The free will defence suggests that evil is inevitable in the world if humans have free will, which is a valuable thing to have. It is better to live in a world where humans can exercise free will and make choices, than in a world where humans are like robots or puppets that have no free will. This is because free will allows humans to be good and do good deeds, which is a valuable thing to have. Having free will also makes us responsible for being praised or blamed for our actions. This is why God considers whether it would be better to live in a world where there were no free will, but this is like a toy world with no real moral responsibility that requires the exercise of free will. Swinburne also considers whether it would be better to be immortal because of the pain and suffering that death causes. This would mean that we would always have another chance to live and do good deeds, but this is not taken seriously.



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2. Outline and illustrate why the free will defence might be an explanation for world. (15)

Example 1

Two types of evil can be identified: natural evil and moral evil. Natural evil that is caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes or volcanoes. Moral evil that is caused by human actions such as murder or theft. It is particularly the free will defence that attempts to explain.

The free will defence is an argument that supports the idea that it is compatible with an omnipotent and benevolent God for evil to exist. God gave humans free will that means evil will exist as a consequence because some will use their free will. For example, the Holocaust, where millions of Jews were killed, was a moral evil as a consequence of humans having free will where there is choice between good and evil.

A world where there is no free will would mean a world where there is no choice. If we cannot experience the extremes. It could be argued that God could have created a world with free will but no possibility of doing evil. This, argues Plantinga, is not possible. It is like saying that you can choose any ice cream flavour you want but there is only strawberry. It is not possible to have a world where there is free will but no evil options. Again, if we are living in a toy world, as Swinburne suggested, with no real chance of making mistakes. So, free will is a necessary part of this world, where we experience evil.

Example 2

The free will defence is an answer to why there is evil in the world. Human beings used that free will to commit the original sin. Humans have inherited this evil in the world.

The free will defence argues that it is due to humans having free will that there is evil in the world but free will is necessary otherwise we would be like robots. It is like saying that Bruce could not make Jennifer Aniston love him because she has to choose. God also wants his creation to love him with their free will and not be forced to.

3. 'There are no convincing explanations for the problem of evil.' Assess this claim. (15)

Example 1

I agree with this claim because none of the explanations for why there is evil in the world. There is so much evil and suffering. They cannot explain why so many people are suffering from volcanoes erupting. They also can't explain why babies and innocent children are suffering.

The process theodicy is a poor explanation. It is a cop-out because God is not responsible for evil because he is not omnipotent. Christians believe that God is omnipotent and can do anything.

In conclusion, there are no convincing religious explanations of why there is evil in the world.

Example 2

The problem of evil is indeed a problem if God is meant to be omnipotent and all-powerful. He has the power to stop evil and he would not want his creation to suffer and yet there is evil in the world. This is the problem of evil. He explains that evil exists because of free will.

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God's relationship with humans is like that of a father and child. Sometimes we make mistakes in order to develop and learn. Sometimes a child cannot see and interprets a parent's actions as unfeeling and cruel. Ultimately, suffering helps us

This argument may be acceptable in principle, but it can't justify the extent of suffering and evil in the world. It can also be argued that not everyone develops and grows through suffering. It also doesn't explain why babies and innocent animals have to suffer. They cannot develop their souls.

The free will defence is another argument used to justify the problem of evil. Free will means a world where there is no happiness or sadness, where we have no choices to love people or God. In a world where we have no chance of learning from our mistakes. So, free will is a necessary part of a world where we can learn.

Again, this argument does not account for the amount of suffering there is in the world and innocent animals should have to suffer so that humans can have free will.

In conclusion, Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, remarks that were a universal plan placed in the scales in opposition to the fatal suffering of one person and the experience of it could not be justified. So, there are no convincing arguments that an omnipotent and benevolent God would allow for evil and suffering in the world.

4. Assess whether the process theodicy is a convincing explanation for the problem of evil.

Example 1

The process theodicy could be seen as a convincing explanation for the problem of evil. As presented by William James, it explains how God has limited power and cannot control the world. God cannot stop evil and suffering. It is a convincing argument because it makes sense that there are things that are beyond our control, including God. God couldn't make a square circle, for example, and if God interfered with free will or it wouldn't be free will. It also makes God a sympathetic figure who is suffering with us.

However, traditional Christians generally believe God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. They prefer to worship an awe-inspiring figure who is beyond their comprehension. Hick's idea that evil and suffering are part of a bigger picture where we are allowed to develop our souls to develop. The process theodicy that believes in a God that cannot grow or change is a weak argument. It is an attitude where there is no point in trying to develop yourself. There would be no temptation and instead you might as well do whatever you want to do if you are not punished or saved.

In conclusion, the process theodicy is not a convincing argument for why there is evil and suffering in the world. It is not convincing because it does not encourage people to be good and responsible. According to this theodicy, and it does not encourage people to be good and responsible.

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Example 2

The process theodicy explains how God has limited power and, although he can change the way the world works, God cannot stop evil and suffering because of free will. God suffers as much as we do when evil and suffering occur. This can be seen because it makes sense that there are things that are completely beyond our control. God couldn't make a square circle, for example, and logically he wouldn't be able to stop evil or it wouldn't be free will. It also makes God more of a pathetic god.

However, traditional Christians generally believe God is omnipotent, otherwise they prefer to see him as an awe-inspiring figure who is beyond their comprehension. They think that believing in a God that cannot guarantee anything leads to an attitude of resignation. If you are trying to develop yourself, there would be no point in resisting temptation if you can do whatever you want to do if you are not going to be punished or saved.

In conclusion, the process theodicy is not a convincing argument for why God is not omnipotent, according to this theodicy, and it does not encourage people to live responsibly.

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Examiner's comments

1. Explain Hick's soul-making theodicy and the free will defence as possible solutions to the problem of evil and suffering in the world. (15)

Example 1:

5/15 – this answer is limited. It outlines very briefly what the two arguments are but lacks development or detail. There is a limited amount of evidence and explanation and also a limited use of specialist terminology.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is clear and well developed. It has detailed explanations of both theodicies and understanding, with references to philosophers and use of key concepts.

2. Outline and illustrate why the free will defence might be an explanation for the existence of evil in the world. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer shows thorough understanding of the free will defence, with references to scholars. The introductory paragraph gives the answer context.

Example 2:

6/15 – this answer is limited but does demonstrate some knowledge and understanding. It includes an example of the film *Bruce Almighty* but no reference to scholars. The first part of the answer looks at aspects of Augustine's theodicy. The free will defence needs a lot more development.

3. 'There are no convincing explanations for the problem of evil.' Assess this claim. (15)

Example 1:

6/15 – this answer provides some arguments for one side of the argument but does not provide a balanced view. It lacks evidence and a conclusion.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and has referred to two main arguments that explain the existence of suffering. It could have included the process theodicy had the conclusion not been reached. This addition justifies why the other two theodicies were used. There is reference to Dostoevsky. The conclusion is reached through critical analysis and evaluation.

4. Assess whether the process theodicy is a convincing explanation for the problem of evil. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is well reasoned and thoroughly evaluated. In addition, it compares the process theodicy with those of Hick, which shows that the issues are properly understood.

Example 2:

12/15 – this answer is thorough and critical, with good evaluation. It is not as well developed as the previous example. It does not refer to scholars or an alternative theory as the previous example did. It also lacks some points of view that could be considered.

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A Level questions and answers

For A Level, the 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) be

1. Examine how the process theodicy improves on the weaknesses of Hick
2. Examine two responses a religious believer may have towards the prob

The answers to these questions are expected to be more critically developed and Level.

AO2 questions (will be the Part b questions) include:

3. Assess whether the process theodicy is a convincing explanation for the
4. 'Moral evil is humankind's own doing.' Discuss how it could be argued th responsibility towards evil.

A Level answers to these questions will show more insight and links to other mate through wider reading) than at AS Level.



Student activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answer then be compared to what has been written in this guide.

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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help develop their writing skills:



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band and see if there is anything missing in the answer. If there is, mark the next band down. If there is nothing missing, move to the band below that, and so on. The marks awarded and comments are given in the answers in this section on the topic of evil and suffering.

1. Examine the process theodicy improves on the weaknesses of Hick's soul-making theodicy

Example 1

Hick's soul-making theodicy is a development of Irenaeus' greater good argument. It says that the good for which you have worked or suffered is of greater value than one which you could have had if you had not suffered. If I had to make sacrifices and work hard to produce a good essay, it is of greater value than one I could have had if I had not made those sacrifices. For example. In order to be able to develop our souls, God had to make the world imperfect. If the world was perfect, otherwise we wouldn't be able to develop by going through trials and tribulations. This is known as the counterfactual hypothesis, where the opposite situation of God's world would not lead to humans developing themselves, which is God's purpose. Humans have to be distanced from God, have an epistemic distance from God, so that they can choose to follow God's laws and develop their soul or not. If they knew what God was expecting of them, they would also be overwhelmed by his expectations. Humans had to be created imperfect so that they could freely choose to love God and develop their souls.

Hick's soul-making theodicy seems to account for why an all-loving God would allow so much evil and suffering to happen. Tsunamis or the Holocaust seem to be part of the process of soul-making. Humans are encouraged to develop their souls. David Griffin's process theodicy, in response to the problem of evil, says that God is not omnipotent. He is not all-powerful. He is not all-loving. God has allowed so much evil and suffering in the world. The process theodicy says that God cannot intervene and stop evil and suffering but suffers as much as his creatures. If suffering happens to them. This makes people feel they are not alone on the world (which is what people would feel with Hick's explanation) but it also allows people to take responsibility for making the world a better place for themselves and for God.

Example 2

The various theodicies were developed in order to account for why an omnipotent God would allow for such evil and suffering in the world. Hick's soul-making theodicy says that humans have to develop their souls from an imperfect state to a perfect state. In order to develop their souls, God had to make the world imperfect. If the world was perfect, then humans would not be able to develop their souls. This is known as the counterfactual hypothesis, where it would not counterfactual if the world was perfect. The fact is that God wanted humans to develop – this is his purpose. He cannot do this in a perfect world. In order to develop their souls, humans have to be distanced from God. Humans have to have an epistemic distance from God. Humans also had to be created imperfect so that they could freely choose to love God and develop their souls (Genesis 1:27), so they can use their free will to love God and develop their souls.

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The process theodicy argues that God is still all-loving but not omnipotent and is responsible for evil and suffering in the world. Hick's soul-making theodicy explains why extreme cases of evil and suffering happen, such as the Holocaust. The process theodicy argues that God is only responsible for setting up the universe. God cannot intervene because of the laws of nature.

2. Examine two responses a religious believer may have towards the problem of evil

Example 1

There are two types of evil: natural evil and moral evil. Moral evil is the result of human actions, such as murder or stealing. Natural evil comes about as a consequence of natural processes, such as earthquakes or hurricanes. Both evils cause suffering.

One explanation of why there is moral evil comes from the free will defence. It argues that humans have free will and to make bad decisions that will lead to suffering than to prevent it. Without free will, humans would not be humans, they would be robots who are programmed to do good. Richard Swinburne agrees with the free will defence and argues that without evil and suffering and free will would be like a toy world. It would be a world where an overprotective God. A world where there is no free will would mean a world where there is no happiness or sadness, where we cannot experience the extremes. It could be a world where humans had free will but no possibility of doing evil. It would not be real free will. It is like proposing that you can choose any ice cream flavour except strawberry and vanilla. It could be possible to have a world where there is no evil. Again, this is not real free will. So, free will is a necessary part of this world to allow for evils and moral goods.

Another philosopher/theologian who had an explanation for why God allows evil is Irenaeus. He agreed with the free will defence but also argued that there is a greater good argument. Irenaeus and Hick suggest that the soul-making process we go through involves us experiencing suffering through natural evil. This is part of God's plan in a world where he planned for human beings to develop. The soul-making process we go through involves us experiencing suffering through natural evil. This is part of God's plan, which we are not fully aware of. We cannot develop our souls into the likeness of God if we had it easy. So natural evil is meant to test us and also to help us endure the suffering that natural evil presents to us.

Example 2

One explanation of why there is moral evil comes from the free will defence. It argues that humans have free will and to make bad decisions that will lead to suffering than to prevent it. Without free will, humans would not be humans, they would be robots who are programmed to do good. Richard Swinburne agrees with the free will defence and argues that without evil and suffering and free will would be like a toy world. It would be a world where an overprotective God.

Hick's soul-making theodicy is an upward theodicy where humans have to develop from an imperfect state to a perfect state. In order to develop their souls, God had to allow for evil and suffering in order to provide the tests. This is known as the soul-making process. In order to develop their souls, humans had to be distanced from God. This is known as the distance from God. Humans also had to be created imperfect in order to develop.

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3. Assess whether the process theodicy is a convincing explanation for the problem of evil. (15)

Example 1

The process theodicy is a strong argument because it explains why God cannot stop evil and suffering. God is not omnipotent, he only created the world.

The process theodicy is a weak argument because God is meant to be omnipotent as omnipotent and Christians believe God is omnipotent. A God who isn't omnipotent isn't worth worshipping. Also, if God isn't omnipotent then he can't answer prayers and respond to prayer.

In conclusion, the process theodicy is not a convincing explanation for the problem of evil.

Example 2

The process theodicy proposes that God is not responsible for evil and suffering but cannot intervene any further because he is not omnipotent. This is a weak argument because it is compatible with science, which uses evolutionary theory to explain the Big Bang theory, which explains how the universe came into existence. God created the universe intentionally, with it ultimately resulting in the emergence of life on earth.

Another strength of the process theodicy is that it supports the idea of a God who suffers when we suffer. God is not omnipotent but that does not mean he is not all-powerful. He sees his creation suffer this causes him to suffer as well.

However, many Christians will argue that God is meant to be omnipotent according to Scripture. For example, in Isaiah 40:26 it says 'The Almighty is beyond our understanding'. The God described in Scripture is not the God of the process theodicy does not fit this picture. Christians believe that God is all-powerful, if God isn't worth worshipping. People wouldn't want to pray to a God who isn't all-powerful at their situation, for example.

Another weakness of the process theodicy is that it does not promise any reward or punishment after life, and for those who suffer there seems to be no reason why.

In conclusion, the process theodicy is not likely to be a convincing explanation for the problem of evil for Christians but it may be a convincing explanation for a scientist who believes in evolution and the universe, the first cause.

4. 'Moral evil is humankind's own doing.' Discuss how it could be argued that humankind has no responsibility towards evil. (15)

Example 1

The problem of evil is considered to be the biggest problem for the existence of God. Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* describes God as omnipotent and benevolent. If God is all-powerful and all-good, why is there evil in the world, and yet he hasn't. It could be argued that if humankind has no responsibility towards evil, then an omnipotent and benevolent God could still exist. For example, if it is argued that free will is necessary because it means human beings can choose between good and evil, then there would be no suffering but also no development. According to Aquinas, if God is all-powerful and all-good, why is there evil in the world, and yet he hasn't.

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thing in letting humans have free will that could lead to moral evil. However, allowing evil to be possible.

An alternative theodicy that does absolve God from any responsibility of evil. Augustine argued that evil entered the world when Adam committed original sin. God gave Adam free will with the chance that he would disobey God, and he did. God cannot be blamed for this sin and so it is Adam, and not God, who is responsible.

The problem with this explanation is that God being omniscient, he must have known what his creation would do. If he knew that his creation would lead to moral evil ultimately as the creator of Adam.

In conclusion, from a religious point of view it seems that God is responsible for evil. He created humans in the first place. It is more likely that he did it on purpose to allow them to develop, as the free will defence argues.

Example 2

Evil presents the logical problem of the inconsistent triad. That is that God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good. If God would stop evil, and all-powerful so could stop evil; however it is clear that evil exists, as the evidential problem of evil states, when we look at unnecessary suffering and animals experience. Some have tried to explain this problem by saying that evil is the result of God's own doing.

Many have argued that this evil is the result of free will. Without free will, life would be meaningless for we would not be able to control the intention behind them. However, surely God is all-powerful so he could make a world where we have free will but no evil. Swinburne criticises this view as leading to a 'toy world', where we do not have the freedom to do evil. Evil is justified as a result of mankind's misuse of free will.

Hick offers an alternative in the form of the soul-making theodicy. He tells us that we are not the image of God but must move towards the likeness of God. Soul-making is the process of spiritually developing by overcoming adversity. So evil is necessary for the greater good. This would certainly seem to be true as some evil does allow for moral growth, such as forgiveness. Moreover we would not appreciate our good health were it not for the existence of illness. Some have argued that evil leads to no development, especially the evil suffering. Furthermore the extent and nature of this evil would seem undue as surely God could operate on a smaller scale.

To conclude it would seem that evil is the result of mankind's actions. But this leaves us with a lack of rational significance – certainly Hume would say so. So we should book down and think about the physical problems of evil rather than its sole

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Examiner's comments

1. Examine how the process theodicy improves on the weaknesses of Hick's soul-making theodicy. (15)

Example 1:

10/10 – this answer is very detailed and demonstrates excellent understanding of Irenaean's theodicy further. It also demonstrates critical analysis by correctly identifying how the process theodicy has dealt with problems that Hick's soul-making theodicy has.

Example 2:

7/10 – this answer is very similar to the previous answer. It gives a detailed explanation of the process theodicy, referring to scholars and using examples. However, there could have been a more detailed comparison of how the process theodicy improves on Hick's soul-making theodicy than the first example.

2. Examine two responses a religious believer may have towards the problem of evil. (15)

Example 1:

10/10 – this answer is detailed and developed. The student has referred to several different responses to the problem of evil and has explained the arguments well.

Example 2:

4/10 – this answer does demonstrate knowledge and understanding, but the responses are limited. Only two responses are mentioned, with some examples. It is limited in breadth and depth. The student has not considered the free will defence, epistemic distance and humans being made imperfect should have been mentioned.

3. Assess whether the process theodicy is a convincing explanation for the problem of evil. (15)

Example 1:

7/15 – this answer does consider both sides to give two views but is lacking in detail. The student has not considered the process theodicy in enough detail to demonstrate that both sides have been considered.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and considers in depth many strengths and weaknesses of the process theodicy. The conclusion shows that the student has considered the important points and has not ruled it out outright.

4. 'Moral evil is humankind's own doing.' Discuss how it could be argued that humankind has no responsibility towards evil. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is very well focused, with detail and development. It has considered the free will defence, which is not on the specification but it does show wider knowledge. It also considers the possibility of a *boni* argument, which is not on the specification but it does show wider knowledge. It shows excellent analysis and perception of the question.

Example 2:

11/15 – this answer does consider both sides to give two views (free will defence and Hick's soul-making theodicy). It does not answer the question directly. This could have been done by linking the points to the question. The student has not particularly at the end of the paragraphs. There is appropriate evaluation and conclusion.

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C. Religious Experience

This section examines the nature of religious experience.

Students are expected to know and show:

- different types of visions: corporeal, imaginative and intellectual
- what is meant by numinous experiences (according to Rudolph Otto, and the wholly other
- different ways of defining and describing mystical experiences as presented by William Stace (including numinous and non-intellectual union with the divine)



AS Level questions and answers

Typical 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) include:

1. Explain the different types of vision that religious people might experience.
2. Explain what is meant by numinous experiences.
3. Explain how mystical experiences might be defined.

These questions require a detailed outline of the theory/theories. Remember to

- POINT
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S)
- EXPLANATION

There can be a conclusion but this will usually take the form of a summary of the

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

4. Assess how religious claims might have a scientific explanation that rules out the supernatural.
5. 'We can never understand mystical experiences.' Assess how far this is true.

These questions require two sides of an argument, followed by a conclusion. The conclusion should be in this question; this will have been done in the AO1 / Part a question. The purpose of the question is to assess the student's ability to evaluate the evidence presented in the question.

The paragraphs should follow the format:

- POINT
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S)
- EXPLANATION
- LINK

There must be a conclusion which answers the question and follows from the points made in the paragraphs.



Student activity

Students should attempt to answer the question first before looking at the answers provided in this guide.



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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help them.



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band. Is anything missing in the answer. If there is, check the next band down. If not, move to the band below that, and so on. The awarding of marks and comments are based on the answers in this section on religious experience.

1. Explain the different types of vision that religious people might experience.

Example 1

One type of vision is a corporeal vision. If more than one person sees the vision convincingly something in the world external to a person's own mind. An example is the vision of the Virgin Mary St Bernadette had at Lourdes.

Another type of vision is the imaginative vision. This is a vision in a person's mind. An example of an imaginative vision is that of John's apocalyptic vision written about in the last book in the Bible. He has a vision of what the end of the world will be like.

Example 2

Visions are an example of a religious experience that is often used as evidence of the religion of the recipient. A common type of vision is an individual vision, which is interpreted as religious. For example, St Bernadette saw a vision of the Virgin Mary. When more than one person sees the vision, it is more convincing. If more than one person sees the vision, it is more convincingly something in the world external to a person's own mind. An example of a corporeal vision is of a group of WWI soldiers who saw a vision of an angel who protected them from advancing German soldiers. Not everyone saw this vision.

Another type of vision is the imaginative vision. This is a vision in a person's mind. An example of an imaginative vision is that of John's apocalyptic vision written about in the last book in the Bible. He has a vision of what the end of the world will be like.

A third type of vision is the intellectual vision, which is perceived in the mind. Intellectual visions enable the recipient to grasp some revealed truth. An example of an intellectual vision is that of Saint Ignatius Loyola, who claims to have had an intellectual vision of 'the humanity of Christ with the eyes of the soul'.

2. Explain what is meant by numinous experience.

Example 1

Rudolph Otto was the first to use the term numinous in his book *The Idea of the Holy*. He describes what people from all different religions experience as an experience of something far greater than oneself. C. S. Lewis describes the numinous experience as a type of religious experience in its own right.

The word numinous expresses the holy feeling of a religious experience which is described by the phrase: *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, according to Otto. The tremendous part of the phrase refers to the awe and fear of the experience, while the fascinating part refers to the attraction of the experience.

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experience has three elements: awefulness, overpoweringness and energy. The numinous experience explain how the recipient feels (s)he is in the presence and humility which is compelling.

The *mysterium* part of the numinous experience has two aspects: it is an wholly other, outside of our own everyday experience and fascination when absorbed in the experience.

Otto gives the example of Moses when seeing the burning bush in Exodus 3. He was overwhelmed and felt some presence that compels him to take notice and experience.

Example 2

A numinous experience is a type of religious experience. It is an experience of overpowering and of something wholly other. Otto came up with this word.

An example of a numinous experience might be when someone walks in the forest that Otto gives is of Moses who sees the burning bush.

3. Explain how mystical experiences might be defined. (15)

Example 1

Mystical experiences are a type of religious experience and they are common. James made a study of mystical experiences and recognised some common features. That mystical experiences are ineffable and difficult to put into words. Mystics experience by using comparisons with what we do know or by describing a feature is that it has a unique quality which means that the mystic learns something new. Truth can be known through reading books or through empirical science. A mystical experience is that it is transient and so the mystic feels like the experience may have been only a few minutes. Such a transient experience is like a dream that has profound effects on a person. The fourth feature is that it is a passive experience. Usually the mystic is not expecting the experience; it just overcomes them.

Examples of mystical experiences include Nicolas of Cusa, who talked about the incomprehensible. There are also examples of mystical experiences in other religions. The poet Rumi describes his mystical experience in his poetry.

Example 2

Mystical experiences are a type of religious experience and they are common. James made a study of mystical experiences and recognised some common features. That mystical experiences are ineffable and difficult to put into words. Mystics experience by using comparisons with what we do know or by describing a feature is that it has a unique quality, which means that the mystic learns something new. Truth can be known through reading books or through empirical science. A mystical experience is that it is transient and so the mystic feels like the experience may have been only a few minutes. Such a transient experience is like a dream that has profound effects on a person. The fourth feature is that it is a passive experience. Usually the mystic is not expecting the experience; it just overcomes them.

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Walter Stace described mystical experience as a different kind of consciousness – non-intellectual. The mystic has no thoughts in the ordinary sense and this experience 'an ultimate nonsensuous unity in all things'. Stace also distinguishes between extrovertive and introvertive mystical experiences. Extrovertive mystical experiences do rely on the external world whereas the introvertive mystical experience is an inward experience to the bottom of the self. An extrovertive mystical experience might be where a person goes out and sees the unity of all nature. Happold referred to this type of experience as extrovertive mystical experience. Introvertive mystical experience is beyond the senses, is beyond understanding and is ineffable. In with James's characterisation of mystical experiences as ineffable and that the mystic gains new insights into the nature of reality. This is Happold's God mysticism and soul mysticism. Extrovertive mystical experiences are found in the writings of Teresa of Avila, Meister Eckhart or the Sufi Rumi. Stace considered the introvertive experience to be superior to the extrovertive experience.

4. Assess how far visions might have a scientific explanation that rules out any other explanation

Example 1

Visions are an example of religious experiences and are used as evidence for the existence of God. It can be argued that visions do not have a scientific explanation and so they cannot be used as evidence for the existence of God. The vision that St Bernadette had of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes in 1858 was a vision. It may be that she had a particular condition of the brain. Dr Ramon Barret wanted to find out what part of the brain is responsible for religious experiences and he found that people with temporal lobe epilepsy had hallucinations. The hallucinations would take the form of familiar figures; for religious believers these were of saints and other holy figures.

However, it could be argued that religious experiences like visions do have to be explained. Dr Barret decided that a particular person should have temporal lobe epilepsy. Religious believers decided who should have temporal lobe epilepsy and who should not so he could not be objective.

In conclusion, there seem to be scientific explanations for visions and it is just that some people can have visions and others can't.

Example 2

Visions are an example of religious experiences and are used as evidence for the existence of God. It can be argued that visions do not have a scientific explanation and so they cannot be used as evidence for the existence of God. The vision that St Bernadette had of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes in 1858 was a vision. It may be that she had a particular condition of the brain. Dr Ramon Barret wanted to find out what part of the brain is responsible for religious experiences and he found that people with temporal lobe epilepsy had hallucinations. The hallucinations would take the form of familiar figures; for religious believers these were of saints and other holy figures.

However, it could be argued that religious experiences like visions do have to be explained. Dr Barret decided that a particular person should have temporal lobe epilepsy. Religious believers decided who should have temporal lobe epilepsy and who should not so he could not be objective.

There are other types of visions: imaginative visions, for example. These are not veridical visions because they are not scientifically verifiable because it would be impossible to point to the place in the brain where someone glimpses with certainty an image of future events. These types of visions are more difficult to verify. Scientists may argue that imaginative visions are not real.

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having an imaginative vision says it is not a daydream then there is no way to take their word for it.

In conclusion, there seem to be scientific explanations for some visions and scientific explanation, this does not rule out the possibility that there is a way to have visions. It is the reason that we cannot know what scientists will never

5. 'We will never understand mystical experiences.' Assess how far this is true

Example 1

It is true that it is difficult to understand mystical experiences because they are ineffable because they are concerned with a transcendent reality. This is a sensory experience. Mystical experiences also have a noetic quality because of the knowledge that they would not have gained through reading a book, thinking or the senses. This is also very difficult to understand unless you have had a mystical experience.

However, many mystics from various religions over many centuries have had such an experience, and it does seem to have some common characteristics that help us to understand mystics experience. For example, in Buddhism, the moment when a Zen Buddhist has a momentary glimpse of enlightenment, they feel themselves melting away into nothingness. This sounds very similar to a Christian mystic, such as Teresa of Avila, who described her experience with God and losing herself. It is, therefore, not very difficult to understand about. They are about 'an ultimate nonsensuous unity in all things', as William James said.

In conclusion, mystical experiences can't really be understood to a certain extent because they are ineffable. You may be able to understand that there is something about the experience of losing yourself but what that actually means, feels like and its importance can only be understood by reading people's descriptions.

Example 2

It is true that it is difficult to understand mystical experiences because they are ineffable because they are concerned with a transcendent reality. This is a sensory experience. Mystical experiences also have a noetic quality because of the knowledge that they would not have gained through reading a book, thinking or the senses. This is also very difficult to understand unless you have had a mystical experience.

However, many mystics from various religions over many centuries have had such an experience, and it does seem to have some common characteristics that help us to understand mystics experience. For example, in Buddhism, the moment when a Zen Buddhist has a momentary glimpse of enlightenment, they feel themselves melting away into nothingness. This sounds very similar to a Christian mystic, such as Teresa of Avila, who described her experience with God and losing herself. It is, therefore, not very difficult to understand about. They are about 'an ultimate nonsensuous unity in all things', as William James said.

In conclusion, mystical experiences can't really be understood unless you have had the experience yourself. The fact that they are ineffable and yet mystics have tried to put words to it to make the matter better. They may appear to be saying the same thing but because it is concerned with a transcendent reality beyond senses, words and

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Examiner's comments

1. Explain the different types of vision that religious people might experience.

Example 1:

8/15 – this answer is limited. It gives two types of vision, when three would be expected. An example of St Bernadette's vision is an individual vision and is, therefore, an incorporeal vision.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer provides three different types mentioned directly in the question. The student understands specialist terminology and is a clear and thorough responder.

2. Explain what is meant by numinous experiences. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer goes into detail about the term numinous, which is required. It gives an example as well as mentioning scholarly knowledge and understanding and use of specialist terminology.

Example 2:

5/15 – this answer demonstrates a basic understanding and has given some examples. It is lacking a lot of detail and specialist terminology. What is mentioned is correct but lacking in development. Walking in the countryside could be an example of nature mysticism) but this needs explaining.

3. Explain how mystical experiences might be experienced. (15)

Example 1:

9/15 – this answer is a good start but has development in the first paragraph. The student has given an example (Happold) could have been looked at as well and examples of other scholars.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and shows excellent knowledge and understanding. It is in full, with scholars and examples given. Mentioning Happold and linking his work to the concept of mystical experiences shows proper understanding.

4. Assess how far visions might have a scientific explanation that rules out any religious explanation.

Example 1:

10/15 – this answer does give two sides to the argument and evaluates to a certain extent. It has considered the arguments for and against. It has also mentioned how people have benefitted from looking at other types of vision as well to give a better picture.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is developed and has carefully considered the arguments for and against. It has reached a clear conclusion. The student has also included different types of vision in the conclusion. The student has also included different types of vision in the conclusion.

5. 'We will never understand mystical experiences.' Assess how far this is true.

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is detailed, showing careful consideration of the issues that are raised. It has reached a clear conclusion. There are examples that help prove a point, and use of specific terminology.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is identical to Example 1 but has a different conclusion, which is also reached.

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A Level questions and answers

For A Level, the 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) be

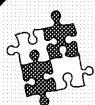
1. **Examine the different types of visions.**
2. **Examine the nature of mystical experiences.**

The answers to these questions are expected to be more critically developed and at AS Level.

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

3. **Assess how far visions might have a scientific explanation that rules out**
4. **'We will never understand mystical experiences.' Assess how far this is**

A Level answers to these questions will show more insight and links to other material (through wider reading) than at AS Level.



Student activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answers, then be compared to what has been written in this guide.

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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help develop their skills:



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band and see if there is anything missing in the answer. If there is, mark the next band down. If there is nothing missing, move to the band below that, and so on. The marks awarded and comments are given in the answers in this section on the basis of this experience.

1. Examine different types of vision. (10)

Example 1

Visions are an example of a religious experience that is often used as evidence of the religion of the recipient. A common type of vision is an individual vision, which is interpreted as religious. For example, St Bernadette saw a vision of the Virgin Mary. When more than one person sees the vision but not necessarily everyone, it is called a corporeal vision. If more than one person sees the vision then it is more convincingly something that is not in a person's own mind. An example of a corporeal vision is of a group of WWI soldiers who saw a vision of an angel who protected them from advancing German soldiers. Everyone present saw this vision.

Another type of vision is the imaginative vision. This is a vision in a person's mind. An example of an imaginative vision is that of John's apocalyptic vision written about in the last book in the Bible. He has a vision of what the end of the world will be like. It is important to differentiate between individual, corporeal visions and imaginative visions. If a person sees a vision then it is more convincing that it actually exists in the external world and may be the work of people. The point is that an imaginative vision has a religious significance. It is a valuable religious experience.

A third type of vision is the intellectual vision, which is perceived in the mind. Intellectual visions enable the recipient to grasp some revealed truth. An example of an intellectual vision is that of Saint Ignatius Loyola who claims to have had an intellectual vision of 'the humanity of Christ with the eyes of the soul'. This type of vision is not seen with the eyes. Loyola's example is 'seen' with the 'eyes of the soul'. It produces important insights that make it another valuable religious experience.

Example 2

Visions are an example of a religious experience that is often used as evidence of the religion of the recipient. A common type of vision is an individual vision, which is interpreted as religious. For example, St Bernadette saw a vision of the Virgin Mary. When more than one person sees the vision but not necessarily everyone, it is called a corporeal vision. If more than one person sees the vision then it is more convincingly something that is not in a person's own mind. An example of a corporeal vision is of a group of WWI soldiers who saw a vision of an angel who protected them from advancing German soldiers. Everyone present saw this vision.

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Another type of vision is the imaginative vision. This is a vision in a person's imagination. An example of an imaginative vision is that of John's apocalyptic vision written about in the last book in the Bible. He has a vision of what the end of the world will be like.

A third type of vision is the intellectual vision, which is perceived in the mind's eye. Intellectual visions enable the recipient to grasp the revealed truth. An example of an intellectual vision is that of Saint Ignatius Loyola, who said he had an intellectual vision of 'the humanity of Christ with the presence of the soul'.

2. Examine the nature of mystical experiences. (10)

Example 1

Mystical experiences are a type of religious experience where a mystic has a direct, sensory and non-intellectual. It does not involve the senses and so there is nothing that involves the intellect – that is why it is non-intellectual. It is an experience of union.

William James has four characteristics of a mystical experience. They are: it is personal. This means that a mystical experience can't be described.

Example 2

Mystical experiences are a type of religious experience and they are common. William James made a study of mystical experiences and recognised some common features. One feature is that mystical experiences are ineffable and so difficult to put into words. Mystics describe their experience by using comparisons with things we do know or by describing a single feature. One feature is that it has a noetic quality, which means that the mystic learns a truth, that cannot be learned through reading books or through empirical science. Another feature is that it is transient and so the mystic feels like the experience may have lasted only a few minutes. Such a transient experience is like a drug. It has profound effects on a person. The fourth feature is that it is a passive experience. Usually the mystic is not expecting the experience; it just overcomes them.

Walter Stace described mystical experience as a different kind of consciousness. It is non-intellectual. The mystic has no thoughts in the ordinary sense and this is why it is ineffable. Stace also distinguished between extrovertive and introvertive mystical experiences. Extrovertive mystical experiences do rely on the external world whereas the introvertive mystical experience is an inward experience. An extrovertive mystical experience might be where a person goes to a natural place and sees the unity of all nature. Happold referred to this type of experience as 'cosmic mystical experience'. Introvertive mystical experience does not use the senses; it is beyond understanding. It is in line with James's characteristics of ineffability and that the mystic gains new insights. Introvertive experience is also known as God mysticism and soul mysticism. Examples of mystics are Meister Eckhart or the Sufi Rumi. Stace considered introvertive experience to be superior to the extrovertive experience.

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3. Assess how far visions might have a scientific explanation that rules out any

Example 1

Visions are an example of religious experiences and are used as evidence for the existence of God. It may be argued that visions do not have a scientific explanation and so they cannot be used as evidence for the existence of God. The vision that St Bernadette had of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes is often cited as an example of an illusion. It may be that she had a particular condition of the brain. Dr Ramon Llull tried to find out what part of the brain is responsible for religious experiences and found that people with temporal lobe epilepsy had hallucinations. The hallucinations would take the form of familiar with; for religious experiences these were of saints and other holy figures.

However, it could be argued that religious experiences like visions do have a scientific explanation. It could be argued that God decided that a particular person would have temporal lobe epilepsy. It could be argued that God decided who should have temporal lobe epilepsy and who should not have it. It could be argued that God chose a few.

There are other types of visions: imaginative visions, for example. These are not scientifically verifiable because it would be impossible to point to the place in the brain where someone glimpses with certainty an image of future. These types of visions are more difficult to verify. Scientists may argue that imaginative visions are not real. If someone having an imaginative vision says it is not a daydream then there is no way of taking their word for it.

In conclusion, there seem to be scientific explanations for some visions and for others there is no scientific explanation, this does not rule out the possibility that there is a God who can have visions. It is the reason that we cannot know and scientists will never know.

Example 2

Visions do not have a scientific explanation and for this reason they cannot be used as evidence for the existence of God or any other figure that may appear in a vision. Visions are hallucinations brought about by drugs or sleep deprivation. Visions may also be experienced by people suffering from temporal lobe epilepsy or schizophrenia.

Religious people would respond to this by arguing that it is through drugs or mental illness that God is able to communicate to people. God is a transcendent being and cannot be able to be perceived through ordinary ways. God has, therefore, made it possible for people to 'see' him or other religious figures.

In conclusion, there is no way of verifying a transcendent God because this is beyond our space and beyond our comprehension so even if God did choose certain people to experience visions, there is no way of proving this. It is better to stick with a scientific explanation, which would rule out God because he cannot be verified.

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4. 'We will never understand mystical experiences.' Assess how far this is true

Example 1

Mystical experiences are by definition ineffable because they are an experience transcendent, beyond our realm of time and space. If they are ineffable, then it is unlikely that mystics have found the right words to describe their experiences. Also, mystical experiences are non-sensuous and non-intellectual, and understanding involves the intellect. As all our ideas come from things we have encountered through the senses (the empiricist argument), we cannot know anything from things we have not come across through the senses. Therefore, we will never understand mystical experiences.

However, not all mystical experiences are non-sensuous. Walter Stace made a distinction between introvertive and extrovertive mystical experiences. Extrovertive experiences are those in which we can make sense of these types of experiences. Someone like Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' describes unity in nature, for example, can describe it in a poem. Many people have had similar experiences and have understood what he is trying to say.

In conclusion, although it is possible to understand extrovertive mystical experiences, it is not possible to understand introvertive mystical experiences. Stace considers introvertive experiences to be of a higher quality and it is this type of mystical experience that most mystics have. Therefore, we cannot understand introvertive mystical experiences, which are the most common among mystics.

Example 2

It is true that it is difficult to understand mystical experiences because they are ineffable. They are experiences of a transcendent reality. This is a reality that is not sensory or intellectual. Mystical experiences also have a noetic quality because they give us knowledge that they would not have gained through reading a book, thinking, or using the senses. This is also very difficult to understand unless you have had a mystical experience.

However, many mystics from various religions over many centuries have had mystical experiences, and it does seem to have some common characteristics that help us understand what mystics experience. For example, in Buddhism, the moment when a Zen Buddhist has a momentary glimpse of enlightenment, they feel themselves melting away into the universe. This sounds very similar to a Christian mystic, such as Teresa of Avila, who describes a union with God and losing herself. It is, therefore, not very difficult to understand mystical experiences. They are about 'an ultimate nonsensuous unity in all things', as Walter Stace says.

In conclusion, mystical experiences can't really be understood unless you have had a mystical experience yourself. The fact that they are ineffable and yet mystics have tried to put them into words makes the matter better. It may appear to be saying the same thing but because it is ineffable, it is not possible to understand mystical experiences with a transcendent reality beyond senses, words and concepts.

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Examiner's comments

1. Examine the different types of vision. (10)

Example 1:

10/10 – this answer is detailed and shows critical understanding in describing visions may be similar to imaginative visions. Plenty of examples are given and points made.

Example 2:

7/10 – this answer is correct, with some detail. It would have achieved top grade at A Level. Lacking in critical understanding. The question does ask to examine. Highlighting the differences between the different types of visions shows pro

2. Examine the nature of mystical experiences. (10)

Example 1:

3/10 – this answer is brief and lacking in development. There are no examples. Student could have explained what it means not to involve the intellect. A lot about James's criteria. There are also some inaccuracies. At AS Level it would be the same reasons. For A Level it also lacks critical analysis.

Example 2:

10/10 – this answer is the same as Example 2 AS question 3 on mystical experiences. Answer for A Level. The student has shown critical analysis by showing how they overlap. The explanations of both James's and St Thomas's criteria have been fully understood.

3. Assess how far visions can have a scientific explanation that rules out any

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and shows critical analysis in considering different views on whether they can all be explained scientifically. It is the same as the Example 1. It is just as worthy of full marks.

Example 2:

10/15 – this answer does consider two sides but only in relation to corporeal from what has been argued but ends abruptly. The conclusion could have been verification (from a realist perspective).

4. 'We will never understand mystical experiences.' Assess how far this is true

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer shows careful consideration of the issues, and by including examples, the student has managed to show a deeper side to the argument and wider understanding is shown.

Example 2:

13/15 – this answer is well focused and goes into some detail, with specialist analysis. It is clearly in the second paragraph, and a good, well-reasoned conclusion. More could have been written in the first paragraph about how most people gain knowledge.

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D. Verifying Religious Experience

This is for AS and A Level.

Students are expected to know and show:

- the challenges in verifying religious experiences
- the scientific explanations for religious experiences
- religious responses to scientific challenges
- Swinburne's principles of credulity and principle of testimony
- the importance of religious experiences and their value for faith

Some of this material will be useful when answering questions on the previous topic.

AS Level questions and answers

Typical 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) include:

1. **Explain the challenges to verifying religious experiences.**
2. **Explain Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity.**

These questions require a detailed outline of the theory/theories. Remember to structure your answer:

- POINT
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S)
- EXPLANATION

There can be a conclusion but this will usually take the form of a summary of the points made.

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

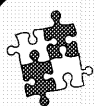
3. **'Religious experiences are easily verified.' Assess how far this is true.**

These questions require two sides of an argument, followed by a conclusion. The conclusion should be in this question; this will have been done in the AO1 / Part b question. The purpose of the conclusion is to summarise the argument.

The paragraphs should follow the format:

- POINT
- EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE(S) / TEXTUAL REFERENCE(S)
- EXPLANATION
- LINK

There must be a conclusion which answers the question and follows from the points made in the paragraphs.



Student activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answer in this guide compared to what has been written in this guide.

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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help them.



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band. Is anything missing in the answer. If there is, check the next band down. If not, move to the band below that, and so on. The awarding of marks and comments are given in the answers in this section on religious experiences.

1. Explain the challenges of verifying religious experiences. (15)

Example 1

Religious experiences are by definition mental, non-empirical experiences. For example, are ineffable experiences where the mystic gains new knowledge of the nature of reality. Corporeal visions are images that only a few people are able to see. It is impossible to prove that what a person experiences really is there and cannot be a religious experience as religious experiences are difficult to verify as experiences of God.

A group of philosophers that consider religious experiences to be unverifiable are the logical positivists. A J Ayer, for example, argued that religious language is unverifiable. The sentence 'God exists' is meaningless because it refers to something that God refers to a being that is transcendent and outside of our time and space. It is meant to be proof of this transcendent reality but these are experiences of something that is in principle or in practice because it is not in this world of sense experience. It is an experience of a transcendent reality, present in the present, but it is never being verified.

A further challenge to verifying religious experiences is the fact that there is no way of knowing that what a person experiences really exists outside of that person's mind. For example, a group of scientists identifies three areas of objection to religious experiences (subject-related, object-related and object-related), argues under the subject-related objection that religious experiences might not be reliable. People who suffer from mental illness or who take drugs can have religious experiences. People who claim to have religious experiences could quite easily be hallucinating. Middle Ages people would unknowingly eat ergot from mouldy wheat, causing hallucinations. Sleep deprivation can also cause hallucinations. The ascetics in the desert that saw tempting visions were actually experiencing symptoms. There is no way of verifying whether what they are experiencing is real.

Example 2

Religious experiences are by definition mental, non-empirical experiences. They are not meant to exist in the external world that is accessible to everyone and that there is no way of knowing that what a person experiences really exists outside of that person's mind.

A group of philosophers that consider religious experiences to be meaningless are the logical positivists. A J Ayer, for example, argued that religious language refers to something that is not in this world of sense experience. Furthermore, the sentence 'God exists' is meaningless because it refers to something that is not in this world of sense experience. Furthermore, the sentence 'God exists' is meaningless because it refers to something that is not in this world of sense experience. Furthermore, the sentence 'God exists' is meaningless because it refers to something that is not in this world of sense experience.

Scientists have been able to identify how religious experiences happen in the brain. For example, found that people with temporal lobe epilepsy have religious experiences when exposed to religious imagery.

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2. Explain Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity. (15)

Example 1

Richard Swinburne presented two principles to argue in favour of people's religious experience. The first principle is the principle of credulity. This principle argues that if a person says they have a religious experience, it is probably the case. The principle of testimony argues the same.

Swinburne developed these two principles to support the idea that people's religious experience is valid if a person is reliable.

Example 2

Richard Swinburne presented two principles to argue in favour of the possibility of religious experience. Swinburne developed these principles in response to challenges to religious experience, such as people having the experience are unreliable and that their statements are not true.

Swinburne's first principle is the principle of credulity that argues that what a person says is probably the case unless there are special reasons why it might not be the case. For example, a person may not be reliable if they were on drugs or were having a hallucination. If there are no such reasons, and the person is not the case, then it is perfectly reasonable to accept the credulity of that person's statement. Their religious experience is probably the case.

The second principle is the principle of testimony. This principle states that if a person says they have a religious experience, it is probably the case. This principle is based on the idea that religious experience provides good reason to believe that the experience is true. If a person is a known liar then why should we not believe what they say (their statements are not true). Swinburne says that religious experience is a report of something that must be true. We should trust the person and what they say.

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3. 'Religious experiences are easily verified.' Assess how far this is true.

Example 1

Religious experiences are not easily verified. Religious experiences are mental and so they cannot be verified. This would also mean that they are not really experiences.

It could be argued that they are verifiable in science. Science shows how religious experiences are verified.

In conclusion, religious experiences are easily verifiable because of science.

Example 2

Religious experiences such as mystical experiences are not easily verified. Mystical experiences are considered to be ineffable because they are of a transcendent reality. This is because it is impossible to verify something if it can't even be put into words. Other religious experiences are also of a transcendent reality and so it is going to be difficult to prove that they are real. A transcendent reality when we only have access to this one physical reality makes it difficult to verify. This takes place.

However, there are a few ways in which religious experiences can be verified. For example, it has been proved that people who suffer from temporal lobe epilepsy have religious experiences. This is a scientific result to disprove the claims of religious experiences but they could equally be used to prove that religious experiences are real as there is a biological reason why people have them. This proves that religious experiences are easily verified.

It could, however, be argued that religious experiences can be verified by science. The fact that religious experiences happen in the brain proves nothing. In order to verify religious experiences, we have to use Swinburne's principle of testimony. This states that if a person states that they saw or experienced something, then we should believe them unless we have a good reason to doubt what they saw or experienced. This, however, is not definitive proof.

There are other ways of verifying religious experiences, other than science. For example, religious experiences change people's lives for the better supplies some evidence that religious experiences are real. For example, the fact that Saul had a vision of Christ on the road to Damascus and it changed him into a devout Christian is proof that something extraordinary must have happened. This is evidence of verification.

There are also cases of corporate religious experiences where more than one person has a religious experience. For example, the Toronto Blessing is a communal experience where people in Vineyard Pentecostal churches are taken over by the Holy Ghost and start to have uncontrollable laughter. The fact that more than one person experiences the same thing is evidence of verification enough for them.

In conclusion, although some religious experiences can be verified to an extent, it is not true to say that a religious experience is a genuine experience of God. The fact that a religious experience belongs to the faith group that the experiencer belongs to. It is, therefore, not true that religious experiences are easily verifiable.

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Examiner's comments

1. Explain the challenges to verifying religious experiences. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this is a very detailed answer showing a careful consideration of the challenges to verifying religious experiences, with examples to illustrate.

Example 2:

10/15 – this answer is not complete. It has considered verification in detail but not the challenges to verifying religious experiences that are unverifiable. It is also lacking in examples.

2. Explain Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity. (15)

Example 1:

6/15 – this answer shows limited understanding. The student does not provide a clear explanation of the principles. The distinction between the two principles is not clear as the student thinks they are the same.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed, with examples and clear understanding shown. The distinction between the two principles is made clear.

3. 'Religious experiences are easily verified.' Assess how far this is true. (15)

Example 1:

5/15 – this answer shows limited understanding. The student does not provide a clear explanation of the issue and against. There are two sides but they are not well developed, and the issue is not assessed thoroughly enough.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is detailed, with examples and clear understanding shown. The issue has been clearly thought about.

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A Level questions and answers

For A Level, the 15-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) be

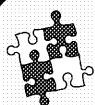
1. Examine the challenges in verifying religious experiences, including the
2. Examine how a religious believer might defend his/her religious experience against criticism and verification.

The answers to these questions are expected to be more critically developed and more detailed than at AS Level.

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

3. Justify the view that, in spite of criticisms, religious experiences are a true indication of the existence of God.

A Level answers to these questions will show more insight and links to other material (e.g. through wider reading) than at AS Level.



Student activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answers. Their answers will then be compared to what has been written in this guide.

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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help them.



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) has done. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band. Is anything missing in the answer. If there is, check the next band down. If not, move to the band below that, and so on. The awarding of marks and comments are shown in the answers in this section on religious experiences.

1. Examine the challenges to denying religious experiences, including the challenge of the naturalistic fallacy.

Example 1

Religious experiences are by definition mental, non-empirical experiences. For example, are ineffable experiences where the mystic gains new knowledge of the nature of reality. Corporeal visions are images that only a few people are able to see. It is impossible to prove that what a person experiences really is there and cannot be explained in any other way.

A group of philosophers that consider religious experiences to be meaningless. A J Ayer, for example, argued that religious language refers to something that cannot be experienced. Experiences are meant to be proof of a transcendent reality which can't be experienced because it is not in this world of sense experience. Furthermore, there is no way of knowing if a person experiences really exists outside of that person's mind because it is, at best, a subjective experience.

Scientists, in relying on empirical data derived from observations of the external world, have offered some alternative explanations for why there are religious experiences. They suggest that religious experiences were illusions based on primitive ideas of separation from the world. People create a super parent in the form of a god to look up to. Mystical experiences of God are just a projection of a wishful mind to be united with the parents.

More recently, scientists have been able to identify how religious experiences happen in the brain. Ramachandran, for example, found that people with temporal lobe epilepsy have religious experiences when they are exposed to religious imagery. Saul, who had a conversion experience, may well have had temporal lobe epilepsy, according to Ramachandran.

Other explanations for religious experiences include the influence of drugs. In the Middle Ages people would unknowingly eat ergot from mouldy wheat. This might explain the hallucinations of visionaries from that time. Sleep deprivation and exhaustion can also cause hallucinations. The ascetics in the desert that saw visions may have had these symptoms.

Example 2

Religious experiences are by definition mental, non-empirical experiences. They cannot exist in the external world that is accessible to everyone and that there is no way of knowing if they really exist.

A group of philosophers that consider religious experiences to be meaningless. A J Ayer, for example, argued that religious language refers to something that cannot be experienced. Experiences are meant to be proof of a transcendent reality which can't be experienced because it is not in this world of sense experience. Furthermore, there is no way of knowing if what a person experiences really exists outside of that person's mind because it is, at best, a subjective experience.

Scientists have been able to identify how religious experiences happen in the brain. For example, Ramachandran found that people with temporal lobe epilepsy have religious experiences when they are exposed to religious imagery.

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2. Examine how a religious believer might defend religious experience against and verification.

Example 1

The argument from religious experience is an inductive argument, which is not deductive. As an argument, it states that if an entity is experienced then it must exist. For example, if God is experienced, then God must exist. Some of the characteristics of a religious experience are that it is non-empirical, perceived as supernatural, mentally unique to the individual, a vehicle to bring a person closer to the divine, and it helps lead a better life.

Swinburne argues that a religious experience can prove God's existence and credibility. His first principle is the idea that 'if it seems to a subject that X is present, then one should believe it'. This argument is that what we think is true is what we should believe it. His second principle is the principle of testimony: 'we should believe what other people tell us that they perceived occurring'. This argues that if we know that other people have experienced something, then why should we not believe them? He says that religious experience must be true, and we cannot trust the person, proving the existence of God.

Example 2

The argument from religious experience is an inductive argument, which is not deductive. As an argument, it states that if an entity is experienced then it must exist. For example, if God is experienced, then God must exist. The problem is whether people's claims are reliable. Swinburne argues that people's claims should be taken as proof in his principles of credulity and testimony. His first principle of credulity states that 'if it seems to a subject that X is present, then one should believe it'. What we think is true is what we should believe it. The second principle is the principle of testimony, explains that 'we should believe what other people tell us that they perceived occurring'. This argues that if we know that other people have experienced something, then why should we not believe them? In short, Swinburne says that religious experience must be true, and we cannot trust the person, proving the existence of God.

Some of the characteristics of a religious experience are that it is non-empirical, perceived as supernatural, mentally unique to the individual, a vehicle to bring a person closer to the divine, and it helps lead a better life. Most of these characteristics can't be verified. For example, how can you verify that a religious experience is non-empirical? A religious person defending religious experiences would argue that the fact that a person has changed their life for the better is empirical proof itself. It is also possible that religious experiences are the result of temporal lobe epilepsy – are proof that people have these experiences so he can communicate with a chosen few.

Scientists also view religious experiences as illusions and possibly the result of hallucinations caused by schizophrenia. A religious believer may then bring forward the idea that a religious experience must have to be met in order for the religious experience to be genuine. The criteria for a religious experience to be genuine are that the recipient must have the ability to interpret the experience, the experience must be reliable, and the recipient must show that what the recipient is experiencing is not there. It is impossible for a religious person to show that what the recipient is experiencing is not there. If a religious person is experiencing is responsible for what is experienced. For example, if a person sees the Virgin Mary and she sees her – as St Bernadette did at Lourdes – and then the person says that St Bernadette is completely reliable, then it is probably the case that the person is experiencing is responsible for what is experienced. Swinburne also argued in his principle of credulity.

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3. Justify the view that, in spite of criticisms, religious experiences are a trustworthy existence of God. (15)

Example 1

There are lots of criticisms for religious experience. Some people, like logical positivists, do not believe it is a valid proof for the existence of God. The word God is unverifiable, it is a personal, non-empirical experience of God. It is meaningless because it cannot be put into practice or in principle.

An anti-realist may argue against this by stating that it is not about whether it is verifiable, it is about whether it has meaning in the religious community. Religious experiences are only meaningful to a particular religious system and have no meaning outside of that. The logical positivists that believe in this system and so cannot understand what was actually happening.

However, religious believers tend to think that what they experience is actual. It is a real world that everyone can experience. When St Bernadette saw a vision of the Virgin Mary, she was convinced that it was something everyone could see because it was real.

A further problem with religious experiences, from a realist perspective, is the diversity of accounts of religious experiences. Some cultures experience Christ or the Virgin Mary, while others experience Ganesha or some other religious figure unknown to Christians.

Hick has a convincing argument against this problem. He believes that everyone is experiencing the ultimate truth and so they are all correct but in a limited way. He illustrates this with the idea of a group of blind men coming across an elephant. One man feels a leg and describes it as a pillar. Another man feels its trunk and describes the elephant as a great snake. They are only referring to one aspect of the elephant. In the same way, all religions describe one aspect of the ultimate truth.

In conclusion, the argument for religious experience is a trustworthy argument for an individual experiencing it. It can also be considered trustworthy for everyone experiencing it is reliable.

Example 2

Religious experiences have many criticisms from logical positivists and scientists. They argue that religious experiences are false, delusional and unverifiable. If we take into consideration the fact that religious experiences are concerned with a transcendent reality and so there is no way of verifying them, then the main problem with religious experiences is the benefit of doubt. If recipients of a religious experience are not sure, then the main problem of religious experiences is the benefit of doubt. Some cultures experience Christ or the Virgin Mary, while others experience Ganesha or some other religious figure unknown to Christians. If everyone is experiencing the same thing, then everyone should be experiencing the same thing.

Hick has a convincing argument against this problem. He believes that everyone is experiencing the ultimate truth and so they are all correct but in a limited way. Religious experiences are all correct but in a limited way. He illustrates this with the idea of a group of blind men coming across an elephant. One man feels a leg and describes the elephant as a pillar. Another man feels its trunk and describes the elephant as a great snake. They are all correct but only referring to one aspect of the elephant. In the same way, all religions are correct but only describing one aspect of the ultimate truth.

In conclusion, the argument for religious experience is a trustworthy argument for an individual experiencing it. It can also be considered trustworthy for everyone experiencing it is reliable.

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Examiner's comments

1. Examine the challenges in verifying religious experiences, including the challenge of the other side. (10)

Example 1:

10/10 – this is a very detailed answer, showing a full consideration of the scientific explanations shows critical analysis and the use of examples to link proper understanding.

Example 2:

6/10 – this answer is not complete. It has considered verification in detail but explanation of religious experiences. It is also lacking in examples.

2. Examine how a religious believer might defend religious experience against criticism and verification. (10)

Example 1:

5/10 – this answer is limited to just Swinburne's responses. It does provide detail which is good, but there is no mention of responses to science or verification.

Example 2:

10/10 – this answer is detailed, with quotes, names of scholars and examples and there is breadth by looking at many explanations that science has proposed.

3. Justify the view that, in spite of criticisms, religious experiences are a trustworthy basis for the existence of God. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer has considered the issue from many sides and incorporated sections, which show a good understanding and critical analysis. Scholars are used to support the argument.

Example 2:

9/15 – this answer has provided different views and focused on one problem which is fine. The problem is with the conclusion, which is inconsistent with what the question asks. The conclusion should have been about the strength of Hick's pluralism – religious experiences are true but not a complete picture. The evaluation is, therefore, flawed in the reasoning.

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E. Religious Language

This topic is for A Level only

This section provides some responses relating to questions on religious language following:

- the cognitive approach and the non-cognitive approach to religious language
- verification and falsification as criteria for the meaningfulness of religious statements
- responses to verification and falsification by Hick, Hare and Wittgenstein
- Tillyer, Lewis and the *via negativa* on religious language; their strengths

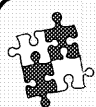
A Level questions and answers

Examples of some A Level 10-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) include:

1. Examine whether religious language is meaningful in terms of verification.
2. 'Of what we cannot speak we must remain silent.' Examine this claim with reference to religious language.
3. Examine the contributions of analogy and language games to a study of religious language.

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

4. Assess whether religious language is devoid of meaning.
5. Assess whether language games are an appropriate approach to take to religious language.
6. Assess whether religious language has justifiable uses.



Self-reflection activity

Students should try to answer the question first before looking at the answers. Their answers will then be compared to what has been written in this guide.

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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help them.



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) has done well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band and see if anything is missing in the answer. If there is, check the next band down. If not, move to the band below that, and so on. The awarding of marks and comments are shown in the answers in this section on religious language.

1. Examining the claim that religious language is meaningful in terms of verification

Example

In the 20th century a group of philosophers known as the logical positivists argued that statements that are meaningful are those statements that can be verified. They therefore argued that religious language is meaningless. For example, 'water boils at 100 degrees' is meaningful because it can be verified in practice. Moritz Schlick added the condition that meaningful statements are statements that can be verified in practice or in principle. He added 'in principle' because there will be statements that cannot be verified in practice but can be verified in principle. For example, 'the moon is made of cheese', that before 1969 could not have been verified in practice but it could be verified in principle. Unfortunately, however, religious language that includes statements such as 'life after death' cannot be verified in practice or in principle as they cannot be verified. According to the logical positivist A J Ayer such statements are meaningless. He argued that 'whether such things exist is not a genuine question.'

Logical positivists take a cognitive view towards statements. This means that statements are either true or false in the same way as statements about the natural world. John Hick takes a non-cognitive view and argues that religious language is neither true nor false. He illustrated his point with his parable of the celestial city. In this parable there are two travellers. One is an atheist, travel down a road. The traveller represents the atheist. The other traveller represents a theist. The atheist believes the road will lead nowhere. The theist believes it will lead to a celestial city which represents heaven whereas the atheist believes it will lead nowhere. One of the two travellers will be proved right. The theist's road (which represents death). This kind of proof Hick calls eschatological verification.

Anthony Flew responded to Hick by arguing that religious language may be true but it cannot be falsified. He used John Wisdom's parable of the gardener to illustrate his point. Two explorers come across a clearing in the jungle and one claims there must be a gardener (the theist's belief in God). The other explorer does not believe there is a gardener (the atheist's belief). They put up all sorts of traps to test their different hypotheses. None of them ever find any proof. The explorer who still believes there is a gardener provides all sorts of excuses. He says 'the gardener is invisible', 'the gardener is nocturnal', 'the gardener is clever'. In this way the statement 'there is a gardener' or 'God exists' cannot be falsified. No evidence against these claims will be enough to prove them wrong. As Flew said 'it is killed by inches, its death by a thousand qualifications'. Religious language is meaningless because it cannot be falsified.

R M Hare argued that religious language cannot be falsified but he added that it can be meaningful. He illustrated his point with the parable of the lunatic student. A student is convinced that all the dons are out to get him. This conviction, Hare calls a religious 'blik'. He introduced to some dons who are clearly nice but he is still convinced they are out to get him. His belief about the dons is meaningful to him. In the same way, religious language is meaningful because it cannot be falsified.

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Example 2

Logical positivists claim that the only things that are meaningful are those that can be verified. Religious language that includes statements such as 'God exists' or 'Heaven exists' cannot be verified and so is not meaningful.

Hick argued that religious language can be proved to be true or false. He illustrated this with the parable of the celestial city. In this parable two travellers, one representing a theist and the other an atheist, are on a road. The traveller representing the theist believes the road will lead to a city in the sky, a heaven, whereas the traveller representing the atheist believes it will lead to a city of hell. Both travellers will be disappointed when they reach the end of the road (which is the proof of the falsity of both claims). This is a form of falsification.

Flew used John Wisdom's parable of the gardener. Two explorers come across a garden. One claims there must be a gardener (this represents the theist and his belief in God) and the other does not believe there is a gardener (this represents the atheist). They put forward their different hypotheses. None of the traps manages to capture any proof of the existence of a gardener. The one who believes there is a gardener provides all sorts of reasons why this might be.

2. 'Of what we cannot speak we must remain silent.' Examine this claim with reference to religious language. (10)

Example 1

Logical positivism believes religious language should be just like scientific language, something that can be proven to be true or false. Religious language cannot be proven to be true or false and, therefore, 'of what we cannot speak we must remain silent'.

Wittgenstein developed his idea of language games to illustrate how language is used in different contexts. He argued that language users have a specific understanding of what can be said in a particular context. For example, religious believers understand 'God' as an omnipotent power. In a scientific context, the word 'God' does not have the same meaning; it has no meaning, because God is not a scientific concept. Religious believers and logical positivists play different language games. It is for this reason that religious language 'must remain silent' when commenting on scientific matters. Logical positivism still has meaning, however, to those in the religious form of life. Logical positivism's language game of religious believers 'must remain silent' when commenting on scientific matters.

Example 2

This is a famous quote from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein wrote this during his logical positivist phase. It can be interpreted to mean that religious language is not meaningful in practice or in principle and is, therefore, something we should remain silent about.

Logical positivism takes a cognitivist approach to religious language and believes it should be like scientific language: it refers to something that can be proven to be true or false about the world. For example, 'Water boils at 100 degrees' is meaningful because it can be verified. Moritz Schlick, a logical positivist, added the condition that meaningful statements must be verifiable in practice or in principle. He added 'in principle' because the statement 'man can go to the moon', that before 1969 could not have been verified, is still meaningful because it is possible in principle. In connection with this, logical positivists refer to the principle of verification in determining whether something is meaningful or not. Religious language cannot be verified in practice or in principle because it is about the transcendent and is, therefore, 'of what we cannot speak we must remain silent'.

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In Wittgenstein's later phase in his philosophy, he took a non-cognitivist approach, believing that such statements as 'God is omnipotent' or 'there is life after death' are not statements that can be proven to be true or false. Wittgenstein used language games to illustrate how language works. In different forms of life, people have a specific understanding of what certain words mean to them. For example, religious believers understand 'God' as an omnipotent power. In a logical positivist form of life, 'God' has the same meaning; it has no meaning, because it is not an omnipotent power in the scientific world. Religious believers and logical positivists play different language games and are not able to understand the world that religious believers have and vice versa. Religious language cannot refer to anything factual in a logical positivist sense, but it is however meaningful in the religious form of life. Logical positivists do not understand the world of religious believers 'must remain silent' when commenting on religious language.

3. Examine the contributions of analogy and language games to a study of re

Example 1

Thomas Aquinas viewed religious language as analogous. He rejected the idea of univocal language, where a word describing God as 'our father' literally means father. Words used to describe God must have different or ambiguous meanings. If religious language were equivocal, it would be impossible to understand any description of God. Aquinas accepts that God's words are not exact words to describe God – we can use analogies. This is how religious language can be meaningful. God created the world and so there is a causal link between God and the world. We can describe God by drawing an analogy with what he has created. Aquinas identifies two types of analogy: analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality. In the case of an analogy of attribution, when God is described as wise, this does not mean that he is like a wise person. Rather, it means that God possesses the necessary qualities to produce wisdom. In the case of an analogy of proportionality, when God is described as 'good' this means that God is 100% perfect. No creature will ever reach this target. God cannot be anything but perfect. The attributes of God are proportional to his nature as the attributes of humans are to their nature.

Example 2

Thomas Aquinas viewed religious language as analogous. He rejected the idea of univocal language, where a word describing God as 'our father' literally means father. Words used to describe God must have different or ambiguous meanings. If religious language were equivocal, we would be unable to understand any description of God. Aquinas accepts that God is transcendent and that no words can fully describe God. We could use Dionysius' idea of the *via negativa* and describe God by what he is not, but Aquinas argued that instead we can use analogies. This makes religious language become meaningful. God created the world and so there is a causal link between God and the world. God can be described by drawing an analogy with what he has created. Aquinas uses three types of analogies: analogy of attribution and analogy of proportion. In the case of analogy of attribution, for example, when God is described as 'good', this does not mean that he is like a good person, but that he is magnified – rather than diminished – so that God has the necessary qualities to produce good in the world. Describing God as 'good' this means that God is 100% good, while human goodness is a form that will never reach this target. God cannot be anything but perfect. Human goodness is only proportional to his nature as the attributes of humans are to their nature.

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Taking a non-cognitive view of religious language, Wittgenstein claimed that the particular language game used and understood by those in a particular form of life. He believed that religious language is used to express a certain attitude rather than to describe affairs in the world. Different forms of life refer to different communities of language users who use words in a particular way which people in other forms of life do not at all. They play a different language game. For example, to a religious person, the word God is meaningful and refers to a transcendent being who guides their decisions and actions. To logical positivists, only things that can be verified have meaning and as a transcendent being, there will never be evidence of a transcendent God – it is meaningless. They are using the word God in a different language game. It would be like accusing a football player of foul play because he is picking up the ball. Picking up the ball is in the language game of football players. In the same way, logical positivists would say the word God is meaningless if they do not understand the rules for the religious language game.

4. Assess whether religious language is devoid of meaning. (15)

Example 1

Those philosophers who consider religious language to be devoid of meaning are cognitivists who believe that religious language should be talking about things that can be true or false and the way of proving them to be true or false is through verification. Logical positivists. A J Ayer was a logical positivist who argued that the word God is devoid of meaning because it refers to a transcendent being who is not real in the sense of being real in the world. It cannot be verified and is meaningless.

Hick disagreed with Ayer that religious language is meaningless. He believed that religious language can be verified eschatologically. He illustrated this in his parable of the celestial city. Two people are walking down a road. One, representing the theist, believes it leads to a city. The other (representing an atheist) believes the road leads to a dead end. At the end of the road, they are told which one was right. In the same way, a theist and an atheist can be verified at the end of time. Hick refers to this as eschatological verification.

In conclusion, religious language is not devoid of meaning because it can be verified eschatologically.

Example 2

Those philosophers who consider religious language to be devoid of meaning are cognitivists who believe that language should be talking about things that can be true or false and the way of proving them to be true or false is through verification. Logical positivists. A J Ayer argued that the word God did not make sense. It refers to a transcendent being who is not real in the world. The word God has no literal meaning and is devoid of meaning. This view makes sense; logical positivists generally believe that only things that can be verified have meaning.

Logical positivists, however, also believe that things that cannot be verified are meaningless. They are restricted to things that can be verified and that anything that falls short of this is meaningless. Religious believers, on the other hand, have faith based on an intuition. In this respect, Wittgenstein's view is more sympathetic to religious belief and shows how religious language does not need proof to have meaning. Meaning is created in forms of life, where verification is not important. It is only in the logical positivist form of life that verification is important. This view is more sympathetic to religious belief and shows how religious language can have meaning in the religious form of life.

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5. Assess whether language games are an appropriate approach to take towards religious language

Example 1

Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that religious language was meaningful. However, his approach and beliefs that statements reflect attitudes and are meaningful only within a particular form of life. One form of life is the religious form of life that plays a particular language game, where terms such as God have a meaning. This approach is different from the idea that religious people rely on faith rather than evidence or their beliefs. Science is a different language game where the term God is meaningless because within science, God cannot be verified to be meaningful. Within the form of life of the religious believer, however, religious language doesn't need verification or falsification to be meaningful. Religious language is meaningful as an attitude within the religious form of life or community.

Unfortunately, there are problems with this approach. It is usually the case that religious believers actually believe that God exists and can be verified. Hick used the parable of the blind men to illustrate this. Religious language can be verified when we die (eschatological verification). However, we have all kinds of other evidence – to use the language game of science – to show that God does not exist. For example, the teleological argument or the cosmological argument.

It also follows that if different forms of life play different language games, then people of different forms of life will never be able to understand each other. They will only understand each other within their own form of life. However, there are plenty of examples of religious believers that are not religious. For example, two different forms of life, it could be argued.

In conclusion, the cognitive view seems to make more sense when it comes to religious language. Religious believers see religious language as statements about things that are not attitudes or beliefs. Furthermore, religious language can be verified, as Hick argued, and is meaningful. We just have to wait until we die.

Example 2

Wittgenstein believed that statements reflect attitudes and are meaningful only within a particular form of life. Forms of life are particular areas of life that use certain terms in a particular way. Those terms are part of the 'language game' used by those in that area. Those not part of the form of life, these terms are meaningless. For example, the term 'goal' is meaningless to a football player because he/she sees the ball as something that can be kicked into the goal.

One form of life is the religious form of life that plays a particular language game, where terms such as God have a meaning. Science or logical positivism is a different language game where the term God is meaningless because within their language game, God cannot be verified to be meaningful. Within the form of life of the religious believer, however, religious language doesn't need verification or falsification to be meaningful. Religious language is, therefore, meaningful as an attitude within the religious form of life or community.

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Unfortunately, there are problems with this approach. It is usually the case that people do not actually believe that God exists and can be verified. Religious believers have a different view of God exists – for example, the teleological argument or the cosmological argument.

6. Assess whether religious language has justifiable uses. (15)

Example 1

The question suggests that religious language might be useless. This might be considered religious language to be meaningless because it cannot be verified. Logical positivists. A logical positivist, thought that God-talk was nonsense because it transcended what can be verified in this world. This view would be scrapped as a philosophical discussion because it has no justifiable uses.

However, Thomas Aquinas believed that even though God is a transcendent being, religious language is still justifiable because it can give us an idea about God through analogies. Religious language is not interested in whether it is meaningful or not, because we do not really know what the word God means except by analogy. In this sense religious language has a justifiable use as analogous language used to express something transcendent.

Further evidence that religious language has justifiable uses comes from Paul Tillich. He believed that religious language is symbolic and that symbols are used to help us understand religious language alone is able to express the ultimate because it transcends the capacity of our language to express it directly'. So religious language is talking about a reality that is beyond our language and so we have to use symbols rather than literal words. This is why logical positivists cannot understand as they take language to be literal.

In conclusion, religious language does talk about a transcendent reality but it is justifiable in helping us to have an idea of what it might be like. However, God is considered to be immanent and part of this world, so religious language would be useless because it would be talking about something that so far from our experience.

Example 2

Thomas Aquinas believed that even though God is a transcendent being and religious language is still justifiable because it can give us an idea about God through analogies. Religious language is not interested in whether it is meaningful or not, because we do not really know what the word God means except by analogy. In this sense religious language has a justifiable use as analogous language used to express something transcendent.

Further evidence that religious language has justifiable uses comes from Paul Tillich. He believed that religious language is symbolic and that symbols are used to help us understand religious language alone is able to express the ultimate because it transcends the capacity of our language to express it directly'. So religious language is talking about a reality that is beyond our language and so we have to use symbols rather than literal words. This is why logical positivists cannot understand as they take language to be literal.

In conclusion, religious language talks about a transcendent reality, which is beyond our experience.

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5. Assess whether language games are an appropriate approach to take towards religious language (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is detailed and shows excellent understanding of the issues involved. It presents different views, evaluates them and comes to a well-informed decision in the conclusion. Use of specialist terminology is appropriate.

Example 2:

10/15 – this answer does provide different views, but the second paragraph is a bit repetitive and needs to be made clearer. There also needs to be more evaluation, at the end of the answer. The first paragraph could be more like an outline of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

6. Assess whether religious language has justifiable uses (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer starts by explaining what the question is getting at, which is good. It then presents different views, which are both appreciated in the conclusion, where a well-informed decision is demonstrated.

Example 2:

6/15 – this answer shows only one point of view and so it does not address the question properly. It needs to make their points about religious language being analogous or symbolic, and provide more insight into the issues involved.

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F. Miracles

This topic is for A Level only

Students are expected to know and show:

- the realist and anti-realist view of miracles and the significance of these views
- miracles understood as a violation of the laws of nature or natural events and the views on religion
- the views of Hume on miracles and the significance of these views

A Level questions and answers

Examples of some A Level 10-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) include:

1. **Examine one realist view and one anti-realist view on miracles.**
2. **Examine the views of Maurice Wiles on the issue of miracles.**

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

3. **Assess how useful it is to define miracles as David Hume did.**
4. **'Belief in miracles is irrational.' Assess how far this is true.**



Student activity

Students should attempt to answer the question first before looking at the answers in this guide, then compare their answers to what has been written in this guide.



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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help develop their skills:



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band and see if there is anything missing in the answer. If there is, mark the next band down. If there is nothing missing, move to the band below that, and so on. The awarded marks and comments are shown in the answers in this section on marked answers.

1. Examine a realist view and one anti-realist view on miracles. (10)

Example 1

One definition of a miracle is as 'a transgression of the laws of nature by a supernatural power'. This is how Hume, taking a realist view, defined a miracle. He looks at what is possible in the world that can be proven to be true or false. Under Hume's definition, the Red Sea in the Old Testament or Jesus' resurrection are miracles. Hume believes it is meaningless to believe in miracles defined as such because it is impossible to prove them (further proof of his realist approach). He claims that miracles are never reasonable for sufficient intelligence and education for it to count as true and that it is too easy to believe in them (he was thinking of Italy and Spain). He also considers that miracles are based on their attraction to the unusual. A final point is that every report of a miracle is contradicted by a number of people who say it didn't happen. Hume, therefore, believes that miracles are not part of the world and are irrational. This is something that the logical positivists, who believe that only verified things are meaningful, would agree with when insisting that only verified things are meaningful.

Another way to approach miracles is to view them as events that have been reported in particular religious communities. This is the view of an anti-realist who does not view miracles as corresponding to the correspondence theory of truth (where they correspond to real events in the world) but within the coherence theory of truth. Miracles cohere within a religious community's particular language game that a non-religious form of life would not understand. This is the view of Ludwig Wittgenstein who was an anti-realist. For example, a religious believer would say that a resurrection was a miracle that cannot be proven; it is not something that can be proven to something to a religious believer; it means that Jesus was the Son of God, and that resurrection is possible for those who follow the Christian faith. A realist would say that there is no evidence of resurrection.

Example 2

Realists view miracles as events that can be proven to happen. Miracles correspond to real events in the world. Logical positivists, such as A. J. Ayer, would say that miracles are not meaningful because they cannot be verified. If they did not happen and were just an expression of faith, then they would be meaningless. Logical positivists use the principle of verification to say that something is meaningful only if it can be verified. If miracles can't be verified then they are meaningless. If Jesus' resurrection can be verified, then it is meaningful. However, it cannot be proven, not only because we can't go back in time to test it but also because the body can be brought back to life. It does not correspond to real events in the world and is therefore meaningless.

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An anti-realist would approach miracles differently. Wittgenstein, for example, does not have to be verified or correspond to real things in the world to be meaningful. According to his coherence theory of truth, where a miracle would make sense to a particular community. According to Wittgenstein, different forms of life use different language games. So, for example, resurrection means something different than it does for a logical positivist. For Wittgenstein, the idea of Jesus as a saviour for humankind lives on. It might mean that Jesus has a spiritual, metaphysical body. This is something that can't be verified because it is not physical evidence, which wouldn't make sense to a logical positivist but would make sense to a religious person.

2. Examine the view of Maurice Wiles on the issue of miracles. (10)

Example 1

Maurice Wiles describes a miracle as an event that is in accordance with the laws of nature. If the laws of nature are there for us to make sense of the world and so God can't go against the laws of nature. Wiles does not believe miracles happen but he still believes in God.

Maurice Wiles believes the whole of creation is a miracle. These types of miracles are even further away from the rational scale.

Example 2

Maurice Wiles views miracles as events that transgress the laws of nature. If miracles occur then they can't happen often because this would make laws of nature meaningless. Furthermore, if they did happen rarely then this is not morally justifiable.

Wiles believes in God but does not believe in miracles. He refers to the benevolent and omnipotent God who has not performed miracles to save the world from the Holocaust or from terrorism. If God was capable of performing miracles why would he not? God performing miracles by curing individuals of cancer (which would make the laws of nature meaningless) but not saving millions from a horrible death then God isn't fair. If miracles occurring is strange. So either God does not perform miracles or he performs miracles for the odd individual, which is arbitrary and unfair and God is not fair.

As a consequence, Wiles believes in God as a creator who does not intervene. If God is bound by the laws of nature he created. God could perform miracles if he is not bound by the laws of nature but because this would go against him creating laws of nature that are there for a purpose.

3. Assess how useful it is to define miracles as David Hume did. (15)

Example 1

If miracles could be proven to exist as Hume defined them, then religions that claim miracles, such as Christianity, will evidently gain empirical evidence or improve their credibility. Also, as the monotheistic religion Christianity begins with a miracle, (the Resurrection) it points out that Christianity can't be believed without also believing in miracles.

Hume, in his book *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 10, argues that belief in miracles is irrational and there is a large amount of evidence against miracles. He attempted to disprove the belief that Christianity is based on reason by disproving miracles to disprove the belief that Christianity is based on reason. Hume attempted to prove the fallibility of miracles through a two-part argument. First, he attempted to show that it is irrational to believe that a miracle can happen.

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believe the testimony of those who claim to have experienced miracles. Hume defines the laws of nature to be his definition of a miracle, and claims that belief in miracles is irrational as it is irrational to believe in the transgression or violation of natural laws.

In conclusion, it seems that miracles are not possible as natural laws are unbreakable.

Example 2

Hume attempted to prove the fallibility of miracles through a twofold attempt. First, he shows that it is irrational to believe that a miracle can happen, and that the testimony of those who claim to have experienced miracles. Hume focuses on the definition of a miracle, and claims that belief in miracles is irrational as it is irrational to believe in the transgression or violation of natural laws. Thus, miracles, according to this definition, are not possible as natural laws are unbreakable.

Huxley and McKinnon argue that if a miracle was to occur, such as Huxley's example of a piece of lead in the air, we should not hold that the natural laws have been violated. McKinnon further develops Huxley's argument by stating that our knowledge of natural laws is incomplete. McKinnon further develops Huxley's argument when one claims a miracle such as 'water supported the weight of a man' being claimed; that water cannot support the weight of a man, but on this occasion it did support the weight of a man. McKinnon goes on to state that a counter-argument to the statement, so if the event occurred then it disproves the natural law 'water cannot support the weight of a man'. McKinnon concludes by stating that the laws of nature need to be redefined, defining miracles as transgressions of laws of nature. This is useful, as it helps us to understand the nature of miracles.

Nonetheless, there is a great criticism of Hume's view on miracles, as it is evident that a miracle to rule out the possibility of a miracle. Furthermore, Hume's argument is based on induction, which weighs up the evidence, which by definition rules out the possibility of a miracle. Thus it seems as if Hume's argument is self-defeating. Hume constructed the implausibility of miracles. Thus Hume's definition of miracles is self-defeating. Hume's definition of miracles is self-defeating. Hume's definition of miracles is self-defeating. The miracle of Jesus' resurrection, which is often cited as evidence for the resurrection, is a case in point.

4. 'Belief in miracles is irrational.' Assess how far this is true. (15)

Example 1

Some miracles can be classified as 'a transgression of the laws of nature by deity'. This is how Hume defined a miracle and under this definition he considered the Red Sea in the Old Testament and Jesus' resurrection. Hume believes that miracles defined as such because it is impossible to transgress natural laws. Hume never reported by enough people of sufficient intelligence and education for it to be considered a miracle. Hume is the 'barbaric' people that report them (he was thinking of Italy and Spain). Hume's argument is that miracles are reported to people because of their attraction to the unusual. A final point is that miracles are counteracted by an equal number of people who say it didn't happen. Thus, you should not base a religion on a miracle such as a resurrection and it is irrational.

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Hume's comments could be considered unreasonable. There does seem to be miracles to make it rational to believe in them. There seems to be more evidence when they go to the holy waters in Lourdes, France, than people who aren't. Examples of miracles that have been publicly observed, such as the statue of a procession in Bruges, Belgium. You could ask the question why people would of a miracle. All this suggests that miracles are rational enough.

Swinburne also suggested in his discussion of credulity and testimony that in the benefit of the doubt. Most of us must respect their testimony, but we should not believe what they say. Again, why would they want to make such things up if their testimony is true?

In conclusion, belief in miracles is not irrational especially if it is the case that we have seen it. We should take Swinburne's advice and believe people's testimony if a miracle being performed if it is the case that they are a reliable witness.

Example 2

Belief in miracles is indeed irrational because, as Hume argued, the majority of miracles are always religious and will naturally believe anyone who claims to have seen a miracle. Religious people will not look for logical explanations.

However, from the point of view of a religious believer it is not irrational to believe in miracles as it is part of their language game. Religious believers have to believe in miracles otherwise they wouldn't belong.

In conclusion, belief in miracles is irrational from the point of view of a non-religious person.

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Examiner's comments

1. Examine one realist view and one anti-realist view on miracles. (10)

Example 1:

10/10 – this answer is detailed and shows critical analysis when linking Hume's criticisms are further support for his realist approach. Hume's criticisms are not a specification but the fact that the student has included some of them shows understanding. The student has provided examples and mentioned scholars and everything clearly and concisely.

Example 2:

10/10 – this answer is also excellent. It shows proper knowledge and understanding of scholars' thoughts and comparisons between the two approaches.

2. Examine the views of Maurice Wiles on the issue of miracles. (10)

Example 1:

2/10 – this answer is very limited. The answer is not entirely correct and lacks critical analysis.

Example 2:

10/10 – this answer is detailed and correct. It shows critical analysis in drawing out Wiles' argument. There are examples to illustrate, and good understanding of the issue.

3. Assess how useful it is to define miracles as David Hume did. (15)

Example 1:

5/15 – this answer is one-sided and lacks development of the implications of Hume's definition. The paragraph is unnecessary.

Example 2:

15/15 – this is a very detailed answer, showing depth and breadth. There are examples of Hume's definition of a miracle. The conclusion has a slightly different format but the answer the question and follow logically from what has been argued throughout.

4. 'Belief in miracles is irrational.' Assess how far this is true. (15)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer has chosen to focus on Hume's realist definition, which is a good approach. There are plenty of examples and brought in scholars and points from other topics, this shows a wider understanding.

Example 2:

7/15 – this answer has considered two sides of the argument and a conclusion. However, there are some parts that are unclear because the student has not developed the argument. The sentence 'religious believers have to believe in miracles otherwise they would not be religious', for example, is dubious for this reason.

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G. Self, Death and the Afterlife

This topic is for A Level only

Students are expected to know and show:

- the nature and existence of the soul
- Descartes' argument for the existence of the soul
- the relationship between the body and soul
- the possibility of your existence after death



A Level questions and answers

Examples of some A Level 10-mark questions for AO1 (these will be the Part a questions) include:

1. Examine how Descartes proves the existence of the soul.
2. Examine how personal existence could continue after death.

AO2 questions (these will be the Part b questions) include:

3. 'There is no life beyond the death of the body.' Discuss how far this is true.
4. Assess whether Descartes successfully solves the problem of the relationship between the body and the soul.



Student activity

Students should attempt to answer the question first before looking at the answer. This should then be compared to what has been written in this guide.



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Here are some answers to these questions. Not all answers would be awarded full marks. At the end of this section explain why. Students could try the following activity to help them develop their writing skills:



Student and teacher activity

Before looking at the marks awarded, try to work out what you (or the student) did well on. Use the mark scheme to help. A good way of marking is to start with the top band and see if there is anything missing in the answer. If there is, mark the next band down. If there is nothing missing, move to the band below that, and so on. The marks awarded and comments are given in this section on the right hand side of the page.

1. Exam Question: Descartes proves the existence of the soul. (10)

Example 1

Descartes proves the existence of the soul as the mind in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Descartes starts by doubting everything, including his own existence. He asks himself if he could be deceiving him into thinking he exists. However, he can't doubt the fact that something must be doing that thinking. He comes to the conclusion that if he is thinking and so because he is thinking he must exist. This is where the phrase 'I think, therefore I am' comes from.

Descartes exists as a thinking thing and this thinking thing (*res cogitans*) believes that the mind/soul is separate from the body because it has different properties. The mind is indivisible, unextended in space, immaterial and essential to him whereas the body is divisible, extended in space, material and not essential to him. As mind and body have different properties they are different things (according to Leibniz's law of indiscernibles, where if two things have the same properties they must be the same thing). Therefore the mind is separate from the body.

Descartes also proves that the mind can exist without the body. He does this by saying that he could be dreaming that he has a body but he is still thinking. This is how Descartes proves the existence of a mind, which is separate from the body. It is a conscious rational thing that can survive the body.

Example 2

Descartes proves the existence of the soul as the mind when he says his famous phrase 'I think, therefore I am'. This is known in Latin as '*cogito ergo sum*'. Descartes knows he exists because he is thinking. The soul that is thinking. Descartes believes that the mind or soul exists separately from the body. He can still think without the body. He might not even have a body – he could be a brain in a vat. This is like the movie *The Matrix* where you think you are alive in the world but your body is not really there.

Descartes thinks he might not have a body but he knows he has a mind. The mind is a thinking thing and this is not the same thing as a body.

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2. Examine how personal existence could continue after death. (10)

Example 1

One way in which personal existence could continue after death is if the soul survives the death of the body. This was the view of Descartes who was a dualist, believing the soul is immortal and separate from his mortal body.

Descartes and the general Christian view of the immortal soul is derived from the world of Forms, where universal, immortal and perfect ideas (the Forms) exist. These Forms because they originated from the world of Forms and return to it when the imperfect, imperfect body dies. The soul also knows about the Forms and particular things on earth because it knew these Forms before it was incarnated.

The medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas also believed that when the body dies, the individual identity – the personal existence – leaves the body and continues to exist in the physical.

Example 2

One way in which personal existence could continue after death is if the soul survives the death of the body. This was the view of Descartes, who was a radical dualist. The soul was immortal and separate from his mortal body. This view is derived from the world of Forms where universal, immortal and perfect ideas (the Forms) exist. These Forms because they originated from the world of Forms and return to it when the imperfect, imperfect body dies. The belief that the individual soul continues to exist is held by most Christians. The medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas also believed that when the body dies, the individual identity – the personal existence – leaves the body and continues to exist in the eternal life beyond.

There is evidence for the continued existence of a soul that supports the idea of continuing after death. Near-death experiences are one example. These are experiences that occur in the world of any age and they occur when a person is near to death or after they come back from death sometimes being persuaded to do so by a deceased person. A near-death experience usually involves an out-of-body experience where the soul floats out of the body and goes through a dark tunnel towards a light. There is a feeling of peace and joy and the experience is described as more real than everyday reality in this world. This indicates that the soul can continue after death.

John Hick had an alternative theory about what happens to personal existence after death. He believed that the body is resurrected when it dies. This is known as the replica theory. An exact replica of the person's body is created with the same body in this world and the person's memories and physical characteristics so that they can be recognised. This is based on the idea of resurrection that Jesus underwent and it is also confirmed in the Bible (1 Cor. 15: 35-44) where it says that the physical body is raised after being buried to become a spiritual body. This way is tied to the body and, therefore, the body continues to exist.

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3. 'There is no life beyond the death of the body.' Discuss how far this is true

Example 1

It could be argued that there is no life beyond the death of the body because what we think is a soul is, in fact, just our brain. This is the view of materialism. Matter or mind can be reduced to physical states, chemicals and processes in the brain. Materialists base their beliefs on the fact that there is no evidence of life beyond the death of the body.

However, those looking for evidence of life after the death of the body might point to near-death experiences. Near-death experiences are experienced all over the world by people who have been clinically dead. Science has progressed to the point where it is now possible to revive people from death provides even more evidence. Near-death experiences have the same characteristics: moving through a tunnel with a bright light at the end, seeing deceased ones or religious figures, and having a feeling that this is not the end. This convincing evidence can be used to argue that any beliefs about life beyond death are acceptable and quite reasonable.

Materialists, however, have come up with explanations as to why people have near-death experiences. Susan Blackmore, for example, explains that the tunnel of light is due to the fact that the eye contains many cells for vision around the edge. As the brain loses consciousness, the few around the edge remain active quickly, meaning darkness around the edge and light in the middle – a tunnel of light. This explains the feelings and sensations felt during a near-death experience or near-death visions (seeing deceased ones or religious figures) appear. So, Susan Blackmore's arguments are not convincing. Belief in life beyond the death of the body is unacceptable.

In conclusion, it does seem that there is a possibility of life after the death of the body. Materialist explanations can only explain the physical aspects of a person. There is more to a person than just chemicals and brain processes. There is a soul that survives the death of the body.

Example 2

The idea that there is nothing beyond the death of the body is the view of atheism. Atheists believe that all we consist of is matter, and everything about ourselves, such as consciousness, can be explained in materialist terms. Materialists believe that there is only one life on earth; we die; there is nothing beyond this life on earth.

The problem with this materialist view is that when they do explain those who have near-death experiences, they have reduced it to the physical and explained it away rather than giving it any meaning. If scientists require proof from their objective third-person view, then they should not use the occurrence of near-death experiences as evidence in favour of life beyond death. Near-death experiences are experienced all over the world, by people of all religions. They have common characteristics. This suggests that there is something beyond death.

Christians believe that there is life after death and that the soul, and for some, the body, is resurrected when the body dies. In fact, when the world ends, there will be a resurrection of the dead (explained in the Book of Revelation). But atheists obviously have problems with this because there is no proof. There is a major problem with the idea of resurrection. How can a physical body that has died be brought back to life? John Hick has forwarded the idea of a replica: an exact replica that is created. This presents problems. A replica is different from the original. How can we know that this is the original? This suggests that if anything it is only the soul that can live beyond the life on earth.

In conclusion, it would appear that there is overwhelming evidence that there is life beyond the body but the body is not recreated. It is only the soul that survives and continues to live.

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4. Assess whether Descartes successfully solves the problem of the relationship between the mind and the body. (15)

Example 1

Descartes thinks he has proved the existence of the soul as separate from the body. The body has different properties than the soul or mind. The mind is indivisible but the body is divisible and not essential to him. The body is essential to him. Descartes is certain about – it is the mind that is thinking and doubting and therefore I am). The mind is indivisible because if you chop off your foot, it's still there. Mind and body are separate so they must be different.

However, it is not necessarily the case that the mind is indivisible. Freud described the mind as having a subconscious and the conscious and unconscious mind. The mind is also divided in schizophrenia or multiple personality syndrome. Materialists might be correct. The mind is actually the brain and so the brain is essential to a person's existence. A person who is dead – for example, someone in a coma or in a permanent vegetative state – has no mind.

In conclusion, Descartes has not been successful in proving that the mind is separate from the body. He has not been successful in solving the problem of the mind-body relationship.

Example 2

Descartes was a dualist who believed in the existence of a body separate from the mind. He reached this conclusion because they have different properties. The body is material and the mind is immaterial. The mind/soul is immaterial because it is a thinking thing (res cogitans) and we are certain of its existence. The body, on the other hand, is less certain because it is a thinking thing. The problem is how these two separate substances interact. Descartes proposed the pineal gland, the smallest gland in the brain, which he later called the principle of the union.

There is a big problem with Descartes' solution. Locating a place where body and mind interact does not solve the problem. The pineal gland is still something material. This still does not explain how something immaterial can cause something material to move. It is as if a ghost is trying to operate a machine. Only physical things can push other physical things. Descartes has not seem to have successfully solved the problem with the relationship between the mind and the body.

A materialist explanation might seem more plausible. This theory explains everything in terms of physical things so there is no immaterial mind that can't be explained. Unfortunately, there are no good explanations for consciousness or the thing that is conscious. The thing that is conscious is the person's perspective. Materialists rely on science but science is the third-person perspective. The thinking thing can't be reduced to something physical and it can't be explained. The self, mind or soul doesn't exist.

In conclusion, neither dualist nor materialist explanations don't work. Materialists just avoid the problem of the mind-body relationship. On the other hand, it seems impossible for an immaterial mind to interact with a material substance and yet somehow it does. It could be that there is something else.

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Examiner's comments

1. Examine how Descartes proves the existence of the soul. (10)

Example 1:

10/10 – this is a detailed answer which clearly shows understanding and critical analysis. It presents the various aspects of Descartes' argument for proving the existence of the soul, with references and key terms used throughout.

Example 2:

4/10 – this answer shows some knowledge and understanding but it is repetitive and lacks detail. Descartes' arguments are not in full detail. It is limited in breadth and depth for this question.

2. Examine how personal existence could continue after death. (10)

Example 1:

6/10 – this answer is correct and shows some development and use of scholarly references. It could be improved a lot more by giving some evidence of the existence of the soul and by discussing alternative views. This expansion would have shown critical analysis.

Example 2:

10/10 – this answer is thorough and shows proper understanding and analysis. It is well-structured and accurate. There is also use of scholars and a biblical reference.

3. 'There is no life beyond the death of the body.' Discuss how far this is true. (10)

Example 1:

15/15 – this answer is clear and detailed. It focuses on the question, considers different views on death experiences with critical analysis. There is critical analysis that leads to a well-reasoned conclusion.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer is equally good. It focuses on different points that are still relevant to the question. There is critical analysis that leads to a well-reasoned conclusion.

4. Assess whether Descartes successfully solves the problem of the relationship between the mind and the soul. (15)

Example 1:

6/15 – this answer is not focused enough on the issues relevant to the question. It is too general and, unfortunately, not always relevant.

Example 2:

15/15 – this answer does focus on the question and the issues the question raises. It considers various points of view and analysed them well, leading to a well-reasoned conclusion.

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