

2021 Assessment resources

A-level Philosophy

Metaphysics of God

Answers and commentaries

The question numbers in this resource reflect the question numbers from the original papers and match the question numbers in the corresponding 2021 assessment materials.

Question 01

0 1 What does Hick mean by eschatological verification?

[3 marks]

Student A

religious language is meaningful because it's verifiable through its principle and eschatological verification is how Hick proves this. Such as that after a person dies they would be able to meet God in heaven hence verifying religious claims and making ^{religious} ~~these~~ language verifiable propositions which are true apt.

Commentary

The marks for this question are allocated according to how many of the three elements that students clearly explain. This response has all three elements: Hick's principle of eschatological verification concerns 1) the meaningfulness of 'religious language', while 2) the 'verification' and 3) 'eschatological' dimension is captured by 'meet God in heaven'. The student's understanding of this is reinforced with the point that religious positions 'are truth apt'. So, the response is clear, correct, and full.

3 marks

Student B

Eschatological language means to say that religious statements such as 'God loves you' can be possibly be verified in the after life when we meet God.

Commentary

Substantively correct but lacking precision and fullness of explanation; there is no reference to the meaningfulness/factual content of the propositions Hick had in mind.

3 marks

Student C

Hick is responding to the claim that religious language fails to meet the standard set by the verification principle in that it is neither analytic nor synthetic nor does it refer to either empirical evidence. Instead he suggests that it is verifiable in terms of personal experience.

Commentary

Relevant points are made about the philosophical context for Hick's formulation of the principle, and there is a reference to 'personal experience'. However, the substantive content is missing, there is nothing on meaningfulness/factual content, and the eschatological dimension is not addressed.

1 mark

Question 02

0 2 Outline Leibniz's cosmological argument from the principle of sufficient reason.

[5 marks]

Student A

Leibniz's ^{cosmological} argument rests on the idea of contingent vs necessary facts to prove the existence of God.

He argues that the world is made up of contingent things with contingent explanations, that require further explanation. For instance, when asking 'why is the grass green?' we can point to chlorophyll, photosynthesis, etc. However, Leibniz suggests, there

cannot be an infinite chain of contingent facts where one fact in the chain serves to explain all the others.

There must then be some necessary being whose existence does not depend on anything else and is not explained by anything else, but serves as the ultimate explanation on which these contingent facts rest.

This being, suggests Leibniz, is God, and so God exists.

Commentary

Clear, correct, and sufficiently full (as an 'outline') for maximum marks. There is some flipping between 'facts', 'things' and 'being', but this was so prevalent that absolute consistency on terminology was not seemed sufficient to deny student full marks. The logical connection between the points is precise.

5 marks

Student B

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Leibniz's cosmological argument is an argument from contingency which makes a distinction between necessary and contingent ~~facts~~ ^{facts} and necessary ~~facts~~ ^{facts}. It requires no further analysis as to their cause as they are true by the meaning of the terms involved.

Contingent ~~things~~^{facts} follow the ~~the~~ rule of the principle of sufficient reason in which each ~~thing~~^{truth} is dependent upon another cause. For example, an ~~apple~~^{apple falling} from a tree is dependent upon a gust of wind blowing it off. There exists a chain of dependency in which ~~there are~~^{there exists} many effects that are contingent upon other causes. Leibniz then suggests that there must be a necessary truth which in itself is uncaused to start off the chain ~~of~~ reasoning of causes and effects otherwise there would be no ~~things~~ in contingent facts in the first place. We can see that there are contingent facts ^{in the world} and hence there must be a necessary fact ^{to start off this chain} ~~the~~ which he calls God.

Commentary

This response is particularly inconsistent in the key language deployed, with some blurring with arguments from causation, which strictly speaking is a different argument. There is also a mischaracterisation of 'necessary facts'. Nevertheless, the underlying logic of the argument, the substantive content, is correct.

3 marks

Student C

Cosmological argument is in favour of the existence of god as ~~infinite~~ infinite. The principle of sufficient reason, that Leibniz uses to support this theory, is The existence of the earth and universe's timeline is coherent with the existence of God. B being transcendent and a necessary being to have created the heavens and earth.

Commentary

Fragments of relevant material, but little understanding: a point for understanding that this is an argument for the existence of God as a 'necessary being'.

1 mark

Question 05

0 5 Is the concept of 'God' incoherent?

[25 marks]

Student A

Intro - Question of God, definite - divine

Aim - no

P1 - Omnipotence - Paradox of the Stone

Repl - Maccabees / Savage / Aquinas

P2 - Omniscience - Kalam - Omnipotence & immutability

Repl - God is outside of time, eternal / atemporal

P3 - Omnibenevolence - Euthyphro Dilemma

Repl - God is good

C - $\therefore$ Classic conception of God is not incoherent

The classic concept of God includes the qualities of omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence, which ~~mean~~ ^{mean}; all powerful, all knowing, and all being ^{as all good}. I aim to show how this classic concept of God is not incoherent. Whilst problems have been ^{brought} up regarding the coherence of these qualities, I aim to show how these problems can be resolved, and thus demonstrate that the concept of God is coherent.

Q1: The problem with God's omnipotence has been brought up via the Paradox of the Stone. Essentially, it poses the question; can God create a stone so heavy, that he cannot lift it? If yes, then it seems that God is not omnipotent, as he cannot lift the stone, and if the answer is no, then it seems that God is not omnipotent as there is something he cannot do. Thus, it appears as if God's

omnipotence is ~~incoherent~~ an incoherent concept

Aquinas responds to the Paradox, by demonstrating that as it is a paradox, and ~~as~~ a logical impossibility, it cannot be done, and is not a limitation therefore, of God's omnipotence. He argued for logically impossible things, he says, it is better to say that they ~~cannot~~ cannot be done, rather than, God can't do them. Essentially, Aquinas argues that logical impossibilities ~~are impossible~~ such as creating a square circle or a triangle with more than 3 sides, ~~it~~ cannot be done, yet do not limit God's omnipotence.

The same is said for the paradox of the stone. The fact that God can create stones of any weight, and also lift stones of any weight due to his omnipotence, renders the question: can God create a stone he cannot lift? a logical impossibility. Thus, as logical impossibilities are impossible, they cannot be denied, and at the same time do not limit God's omnipotence.

Thus, Aquinas ~~argues~~ ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~can~~ convincingly demonstrate that the concept of God, is logically coherent, and the paradox of the stone is a logical contradiction.

Savage also demonstrates the flaws within the ^{paradox} ~~paradox~~ by posing the idea of two beings. X can create stones of any ^{poundage} ~~poundage~~, and Y can lift stones of any ^{poundage} ~~poundage~~. Therefore, to say that X cannot create a stone that Y cannot lift, is not a ~~limited~~ limitation on anyone's power. This, he argues, it is the same as if X and Y were ~~one~~ the same being. ~~Overall therefore, I believe the paradox of the stone poses no threat to God's coherence.~~

Overall therefore, ~~the~~ the paradox of the stone whilst superficially attempting to demonstrate the incoherence of God's omnipotence, is actually ~~an~~ an exercise in semantics. Aquinas and Savage both demonstrate effectively ~~how~~ the and convincingly how the paradox is logically incoherent and contradictory, and therefore, the concept of God and his omnipotence, is still coherent. Thus, it falls to others to demonstrate how God's other attributes are incoherent, ^{in order} rather than challenging the coherence of the concept of God.

The problem of God's omniscience and immutability ~~was~~ is posed by Kretzman. It is summarised as follows;

- God is an omniscient perfect being
- A ~~an omniscient~~ perfect being is not subject to change, i.e. they are immutable
- If God is omniscient, he knows what time it is right now
- But if God knows what time it is right now, he is subject to change
- Therefore God is not immutable
- Therefore God is not perfect
- Therefore the classical concept of God is incoherent

Kretzman shows that if God's knowledge of things is liable to change, then ~~there~~ he ~~is~~ is not immutable, and must be imperfect. ~~It can similarly be said the same.~~ The same thing can be said for knowledge ~~of~~ our minds, if God knows what we are thinking right now, his knowledge is subjective and liable to change. Therefore he cannot be perfect, and he ~~is~~ cannot be immutable. Thus, Kretzman challenges the coherence of the concept of omniscience and God's immutability, or claim that he cannot change as part of his nature as a perfect being.

~~A response to Kretzmann would consider~~

However, it seems as if Kretzmann's argument is weak, as it tries to make sense of an omnipotent, omniscient, immutable ~~and eternal~~ being, from the perspective of a limited being. Thus, it can be argued that our attempts to 'think' like God, ~~are~~ ^{are} destined to fail. ~~Thus, it could be argued that~~ Thus, the problem of omniscience and immutability could be answered by with the statement that we ~~cannot~~ ^{cannot} understand how God's omniscience works, as we are trying to understand the workings of an unlimited being, from ~~a~~ ^{an} ~~unlimited~~ perspective.

~~Another potential response to Kretzmann~~

Another potential response to Kretzmann comes from ~~the~~ God's quality of being eternal and transcendent. This means that God is atemporal, and exists outside of time and the universe ^{to us}. Thus, it can be argued that God would have an unlimited view of and atemporal view of knowledge, that ~~for~~ whilst for us humans, our knowledge is necessarily subjective to time. Thus, it can be ^{shown} ~~shown~~ how Kretzmann is mistaken in his approach to demonstrate the incoherence of ~~omnipotence and~~ in omniscience and immutability.

Overall, I would agree that ~~we are unable to~~ Kretzmann's mistake is to attempt to understand God's omniscience from the perspective of a limited being, and thus the first response to Kretzmann is convincing is refuting him. The second response, although noting God's other potential characteristics, is still guilty of attempting to understand how God's omniscience works, which I believe is ~~also~~ ^{to do so} any attempt is destined to fail. Thus, I find ~~it convincing that~~ the first response ~~is~~ simpler and more intuitive.

and thus more convincing, as a response to Kitzman. Thus, I believe that the concept of God is still coherent, and if we are unable to always question how God works, although we may wish, as we are attempting to do so from an ~~incoherent~~ ^{incomparable} or limited and untenable position. Thus, the coherence of both omnipotence and omniscience is maintained, the only quality left to challenge from the classical concept of God, is omnibenevolence.

The Euthypro dilemma attempts to demonstrate the problem with God being all loving and all good. Essentially, Socrates poses the question; "Are things good because the gods command it, or do the gods command it, because they are good?" Either option demonstrates the ~~in~~ incoherence of God. The first horn, is to accept that things are good because God commands it, however this would seem to make morality arbitrary. For example if God decided that killing and murder and rape were now criminal commands, it would appear as if this is what is now good, which is intrinsically wrong. The other horn claims that God orders things because they are good, but this shows how there must be a standard of morality that even God is subject to, meaning that God is now limited. Thus, the Euthypro Dilemma demonstrates that the problem in coherence of God being all loving and all good, as either morality becomes arbitrary, ~~or~~ or morality becomes independent from God, ~~both~~ both options which ~~cannot~~ do not demonstrate the coherence of God.

However, a response to the Euthyphro dilemma would be that; God is good. This means that God if God is the source of moral authority and objective moral values, his commands will necessarily reflect this. So whilst it could be argued that God's commands would be arbitrary, they would actually in fact be necessarily good based on the fact that God has created everything, is ~~inherently~~ ^{inherently} good and is himself the only source of moral authority. This would mean that God commands the good things, that are morally right, and thus the Euthyphro Dilemma can be solved. We no longer have to take either horn, but accept a third horn, namely, that God is good and what he commands therefore is necessarily good and not arbitrary. Thus, the concept of God's omnibenevolence, his all loving and all good nature, is still coherent.

Now however, it may appear as if certain commands from God go against our intrinsic sense of morality, for example, Abraham being commanded to kill his son. However, in response to this, I argue that any of God's commands are necessarily good, and thus although things may superficially seem bad, we can see patterns or understand behind certain commands, due to my small point; that we are limited beings and cannot understand an unlimited the reasoning of an unlimited entity. Furthermore, the goodness of God's command is seen by Abraham following God's order, as it was a test of faith. Thus, Overall, the concept of God as ~~the source of omnibenevolence~~ ^{omnibenevolent} is coherent.

For conclusion, I have demonstrated how the arguments against the coherence of the concept of God are flawed, and how ^{Extra space} either they are either semantic excursions which are largely irrelevant, or attempts to understand the reasoning of an unlimited being from a limited perspective. Thus, I believe that the classic concept of God as omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent, is coherent and convincing.

Commentary

This response argues with intent to a clear and coherent conclusion. The logic of the argument is sustained; there is integration and weighting; critical judgements are made on an ongoing basis. There was room for a wider range of (stronger) counter arguments such that the conclusion was more robustly defended. But this is sufficient to access the top band of marks.

Some classical attributes of God are identified at the outset, and the student communicates their intention to defend the coherence of God.

A precise outline of the 'paradox of the stone' is given to challenge the internal coherence of the attribute of omnipotence. In response, Aquinas's conception of omnipotence, operating within the bounds of logical possibility, is used to deflate the apparent incoherence. This is followed by Savage's reframing of the argument to neutralise the apparent incoherence. The student summarises their position on omnipotence and then moves on.

The second criticism concerns the apparent contradiction between divine omniscience and immutability, which the student outlines with reference to Kretzmann and God's knowledge of time, which is 'liable to change'. The response to this begins with an argument against what the student takes to be the inadequacy of the 'finite' human intellect to be able to comprehend how an 'infinite omniscient being' would know the world, and is therefore unable to judge whether there is an incoherence here. The second response takes into account God's eternity and transcendence, and therefore the possibility of God's 'a-temporal knowledge'. The student then weighs the two criticisms and finds the former stronger: the second still assumes that a finite intellect can sensibly comment on the knowledge of an infinite omniscient being, which the student has already denied. This is coherent and consistent evaluation.

The third criticism, the Euthyphro dilemma, targets divine goodness. The student gives a very clear account of this challenge, with both sides of the dilemma precisely outlined. The student responds by challenging the assumptions of the dilemma: if (as they argue) God is good, and the source of moral value, any commands that God issues will 'necessarily' be good, reflecting as they do the divine nature. This argument is developed (beyond necessity) to address counterintuitive commands by God in scripture (eg God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son); in this case, the student appeals again to the limits of the human intellect to know whether an *apparent* instance of divine injustice is *actually* divine injustice: the student appeals back to the story of Abraham which was (in the end) just a test of faith. There are, of course, many more challenging passages from the Bible which could be cited in this context, but the student is already going beyond the requirements of the specification. The conclusion briefly summarises the reasons given for defending the coherence of the concept of God.

22 marks

Student B

I will conclude that the concept of God is coherent. I will begin ~~with~~ showing how the paradox of the stone fails as it presents a situation which misunderstands omnipotence. I will then show how, while the Epistemic Dilemma is a stronger argument ^{fails to take into} ~~not to take into~~ account ~~between~~ all of God's attributes together. And ^{finally} ~~the~~ critical argument of omniscience undermining our free will but God being understood as an eternal being overcomes this. //

God is generally taken to be ^{an} omniscient, omnipotent and ^{supremely good} ~~perfect~~ being.

An objection generally posed to the concept of God is the paradox of the stone which brings into question the coherence of God being omnipotent.

1. Either, God can create a stone he cannot lift.
2. Or, God cannot create a stone he cannot lift.

In either scenario it appears that there is something God cannot do. And if there is something God cannot do, it ~~appears~~ ^{seems}

he's not omnipotent.

However, I think that this is a fairly weak objection as it presents a ~~probable~~ false dilemma. The argument that God, being omnipotent means there is no restriction on his ~~other~~ stone making powers, nor on his lifting powers. The situation merely means that if God can create a stone, he can lift it. It wouldn't make sense to put such a limitation on God's power.

~~And it seems that we can just say that~~
~~it seems that we can just say that~~
~~that God is omnipotent.~~

A stronger objection posed is the Euthyphro dilemma. It poses the following question: is ^{what} good is good because God wills it or is what is good, good ~~because~~ and so God approves of it.

If laws of morality are simply what God wills it seems to make morality arbitrary. Whereas if it is the case that what is good is independent of what God wills, it seems that God is no longer omnipotent as there are laws that he has to abide by.

This modish reply has the paradox of the stone particularly. If we are to admit that God ~~can't~~ answer to a higher law, then we can conclude then that God is not omnipotent.

An initial response put can be given is that an any do that which is logically possible. ~~It is too~~ ~~logically~~ logical impossibilities ^{with a} contradiction in conception and cannot be said therefore, to be ~~impossible~~. Thus if we limit that God can do to only that which is logically possible, in that case we can say that to make morality that which is anything but what is good would be logically impossible. So it is not a limitation on God's omnipotence for him not to be able to change the laws of morality simply because it is logically impossible.

This however is a fairly weak response. Once again we can ask the question whether logic is something independent of God or logic is what God wills. And so we return to the initial problem of God's omnipotence being in question.

A stronger response is to agree that morality is what God wills and yet maintain that morality doesn't become arbitrary. In the case logic we can understand logic as the way in which God's mind works. Now God is said to be fixed, he cannot change and this makes sense because a ~~be~~ being who had all the perfections simply wouldn't change ~~because~~ ^{as} he is perfect. // What the objection takes issue with is the fact that, with morality being dependant on God, what if God changed the rules. It is possible but, while we take morality to be necessary to be wrong, it would be possible for God to make what is immoral, good. This poses ~~an~~ ^a great concern because it would defy logic, he could make necessary truths unnecessary for example $2+2$ could equal 5.

So to answer the objection he need to look at God's nature together rather than separately. God being omniscient, ^{omnipotent} ~~with~~ ^{supremely} good, implies God is not a deceiver. Further more even if he had the power to change the laws of morality or logic

doesn't mean he would. Being supremely good, ~~create~~ it would be a contradiction of nature if he were to make morally bad things a moral act.

Just as I have the power to kill someone, I refrain from doing so because ^{to kill does} ~~it would~~ not fit with my values. But the difference between us and God is that whereas I can change my mind, God being perfect, does not change and so that which has already been defined must not need not be otherwise in the future as I would be to admit a failure of a sort.

It appears that we know have a complete account of omnipotence. & We can further analyse this point of God's unchanging nature in making a distinction between God's ~~eternal~~ everlasting versus eternal which I will come back to as a response to the last objection I will consider.

~~It is~~ the crucial objection is God's omnipotence and omniscience being a direct contradiction to ~~our~~ our human free will.

Consider I am deliberately as to whether

I am going to school tomorrow or not. I consider the necessary factors or method the school is even open, if I am ill or could better spend my time at home. To me it appears that I have a choice in the matter since I have free will. However, if God is omniscient ~~the~~ and his knowledge is infallible given that he is a supremely perfect being, it ~~appears~~ seems that no matter what I think, there is a truth of the matter since God already knows what I'm going to do before I do it and I have not the power to change it since I would ~~also~~ have to change God's mind or perform a miracle. I am certainly not capable of miracles nor can I change God's mind since again it would be to admit a failure.

I think this objection which much changes considerably that we cannot appeal to logical impossibilities, it fails as it misunderstands God's knowledge.

We can either say God is everlasting (in time) or Eternal (not in time / atemporal).

considering that fact that God is eternal it is
Extra space clear that we cannot talk about
God having something at a specific time
since God's knowledge is always present
being atemporal. Everything is simply
within his understanding at one and
the same eternal present. While we
may not be able to imagine this it
is simply because we are finite beings
whereas God is infinite so we couldn't
conceive of it.

But more pressing is the fact that
regardless of whether God is eternal or
everlasting, in saying that God is
omniscient doesn't mean that he is
is a God that interferes with us. Our
choices remain to be our choices and
the fact that God may have foreknowledge
doesn't change that. What it actually
means^{is} that each and every event, each
thought is comprehended by God in his
understanding. Even though for us it hadn't
happened already he understood that
you were deliberating about, what you
considered and what decision you made.
Thus we can maintain that we have free will.

If God is everlasting this implies that he is dependant on time. So is God omniscient? However, this can be quite easily overcome by asserting that, while ^{and thus omniscience} foreknowledge, is not an issue for either stance; we can conclude that actually God is eternal ^{which} is consistent with him being omnipotent.

While neither for paradox or the stone, the Euthyphro dilemma nor the foreknowledge undermining free will ~~more~~ ^{are} sufficient to show that the concept of God is incoherent. Though a brief moment of doubt arose in questioning whether we can say God is everlasting, we can correctly say God is an eternal being to maintain coherence.

Commentary

This response argues with sustained intent to a clear conclusion. The logic of the argument is sustained, and there is integration and weighting. There is a lack of detail and precision on the argument given most weight, however. Philosophical language is used clearly and correctly.

The student states their intent clearly at the outset and briefly raises three objections to the coherence of God which they believe can be overcome.

The 'paradox of the stone' is clearly and concisely outlined, targeting the coherence of 'omnipotence'. The student then attempts to dissolve the paradox by framing omnipotence in terms of positive powers only: ie there is no limit to the weight of a stone God can create, and there is no limit to the weight of a stone God can move. The paradox is not, therefore, taken too seriously as a challenge to God's omnipotence, once omnipotence is correctly defined.

The student identifies the Euthyphro dilemma as a 'stronger objection' to God's coherence, and this is reflected in the evaluation. The Euthyphro dilemma itself is clearly outlined, and the initial response (following on from the response to the paradox of the stone) invokes the logical impossibility of God issuing (arbitrary) immoral commands. But this response is not sufficient, because the question of the relationship between God and logic can be posed in the same manner

as the question of the relationship between God and goodness. This is coherent and integrated evaluation. The issue is addressed by taking what we call 'logic' as 'just the way God's mind works', which is also true of the moral goodness which God wills. The doubts the philosopher has that God's will could change the rules of logic or morality at any time only arise when we take omnipotence in isolation. Once we take other classical attributes into account, like 'goodness' and 'eternity', we see that God's will does not change in the way the human will is liable to.

The most 'crucial' argument, according to the student, concerns the tension between God's omniscience and human free will. The reason why this is supposed to be so crucial, however, is briefly stated, lacking development. Strictly speaking, this particular issue with omniscience represents a supposed contradiction between the concept of God and a claim about human capacities (i.e. free will), although it is in the specification and it is credit worthy. Some of the best students show why this implies an incoherence within our concept of God (linking the 'gift' of free will to God's 'supreme goodness', for example). The response to the issue, drawing on the contrast between everlasting and eternal divinity, clearly has evaluative merit, although there is imprecision in linking this with the issue of 'omnipotence' rather than 'omniscience'.

The conclusion acknowledges that these challenges to God's coherence raise doubts (especially the final one) about our concept of God, but they are doubts that can all be overcome.

19 marks

Student C

In this essay I will discuss three ~~characteristics~~ ^{attributes} that God is claimed to possess: omniscience, omnipotence and omnibenevolence. I will conclude that the concept of 'God' is incoherent due to the failure to overcome the objections that I will discuss in this essay.

The concept of 'God' is the concept of an omniscient God who knows everything there is to know. God is also omnipotent meaning God is able to do everything that is logically possible and God is also omnibenevolent - all-loving. God is perfect as he possesses all of these attributes ~~characteristics~~ I have just ~~mentioned~~ and more including: ⁰ ~~immortality~~ God is immutable, ~~etern~~ (unchanging), eternal (God is outside of time and has no beginning or end) and is

everlasting (exists within time and has ~~no~~ beginning or end).

I will begin by addressing the Paradox of the stone objection against God's omnipotence. The objection is phrased as one sentence 'can God create a stone too heavy for him to lift?'. The two ^{possible} answers to this question is that 'yes, God can create a stone too heavy for him to lift but this would mean that he is unable to lift the stone'. You could also answer 'no, God cannot create a stone too heavy for him to lift' ~~as he is~~ ~~omnipotent~~. Both answers show how God's omnipotence is incoherent. ~~The paradox of the stone is one of the strongest arguments against God's conceivability~~ ^{coherence} ~~is~~

An objection against God's benevolence is the Euthyphro dilemma. Dilemma meaning a

problem with two ~~or~~ options, none of which is desirable. The dilemma states two options. Either, God is the source of morality, meaning everything he says is morally good. Or, the source of morality is external to God he is simply following the moral guidelines. The first option says that God is the source of morality. This means that anything God says, even if he says 'murder is right' would be morally correct as he is the source of morality. The second option says that the source of morality is external to God. Both options are undesirable as in option one God could say anything (including immoral things) and it would be moral which ~~is~~ goes against ~~the~~ the common-sense view that just because someone (even God) says something is morally correct it might not actually be. In the

~~second~~ second option God is not the source of morality. This too goes against the intuition that God is the source of morality and if he isn't then who or what is? This could lead to an infinite regress. God's omnibenevolence is therefore incoherent as we do not know where his morality is coming from therefore, God may not be morally ~~right~~ good.

An objection against God's omniscience includes the incoherence ~~between~~ of human free will and God's ~~omniscience~~. Humans have free will, we have a free choice over our actions. We are in complete control of our decisions and are able to change our decisions at any moment. God is said to be omniscient, meaning he knows everything including what ~~we~~ we are going to do tomorrow and the day after that. ~~the~~ If God knows

all the decisions that we will make, then we have no free will. If God ~~at~~ knows what we are going to choose then it seems as though we never had the choice in the first place. Therefore, ~~either~~ God's ~~cannot~~ ~~be~~ ~~omniscient~~ omniscience is incoherent in a world where humans have free will.

Lastly, the most famous problem against the coherence of the concept of God is the problem of evil. The problem of evil says it is incoherent that an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God would allow the existence of evil. God is omnipotent so has the power to ~~stop and~~ ~~do~~ prevent evil from happening. God is omniscient so he knows all the evil that ~~is~~ exists in the world and God is omnibenevolent~~s~~ so ^{he} does not wish evil upon his subjects (humans). Therefore, evil would

not exist if God ~~existed~~ had
all three of those ^{attributes} ~~characteristics~~
_{e.g. diseases and natural evils like storms}
However, evil does exist so
God cannot be omniscient,
omnipotent and omnibenevolent
all at once. If God ^{does} ~~is~~ not
have all of those ~~characteristics~~ ~~then~~
attributes then God is imperfect
and is therefore ^{incoherent.} ~~inconceivable.~~

One reply to the problem of
evil is made by Hick, called
'Hick's soul-making theodicy'. Hick
claims that the existence of
evil alongside God is in fact
conceivable so the problem of
evil is not actually a problem.
God wants humans ~~to~~ to flourish.
He gave us free will so that
we could make our own
choices on what is morally
good and bad. A world
full of free-will and evil is
an overall ^{morally} better world than a
world with no free-will and
only pleasure. The role of
evil is to make human souls

flourish so we can become
Extra space moral creatures. A world
with no free will and no
evil is not a morally good
as we have no choice to practise our morality.
world. So, God used his
omniscience, omnipotence and
omnibenevolence to create a world
with free will and evil as he
is all powerful and he knew that
that would be the best decision.
He also wants the best for
humans (omnibenevolent) and that is
also why he created a world
with evil so that humans could
flourish.

In conclusion, the concept of God
is incoherent as the strongest
objection (the Euthyphro dilemma)
showed how God's omnibenevolence
is incoherent alongside other
objections demonstrating that God's
other attributes are not coherent.
Even if one of God's attributes
is incoherent it shows how God
cannot be perfect so is therefore
not coherent as an entire concept.

Commentary

This is a clear response in the form of an argument, and there is clear intent. The content is relevant and broadly correct, but there is a lack of detail and precision throughout. Evaluation is limited, with few counterarguments and so significant gaps in content where such evaluation ought to have been.

The student begins by identifying several key divine attributes and states their intention to argue that the concept of God is incoherent. A range of attributes are then defined in the opening paragraph, which is good knowledge and understanding, but it is not achieving much in terms of evaluation yet.

The student actually begins evaluating the coherence of the concept of God when they raise the 'paradox of the stone' to attack divine omnipotence. This is relevant and correct, but not precise and detailed. No response is considered.

In the next paragraph, the 'Euthyphro dilemma' is outlined as an objection to God's 'benevolence'. Again, this is basically accurate, but it is not explained in detail or with precision. No response is considered.

The student then turns to problems raised by divine 'omniscience' and the 'incoherence with human free will', which is clearly illustrated. No response is considered.

Finally, the student outlines the problem of evil, accurately, and this is certainly relevant because it concerns a fact about the world and several supposed facts about God's nature. In this case, a response is offered in the case of Hick's 'soul making' argument, which is accurate but not precise and detailed.

The conclusion reaffirms the incoherence of God, although no reply to Hick was ever offered, and the Euthyphro dilemma is asserted to be the strongest argument. The reasoning behind this weighting is not clear. Had counter arguments been attempted (and repudiated) for each objection to God's coherence, the essay could have been accessing the 16–20 mark band. However, it is a largely one-sided argument, and a conclusion with insufficient support.

12 marks

Student D

Planning:

P1 - Introduction

P2 - Problem of evil

P3 - The world is complex so it must have a designer

P4 - Personal opinion

P5 - Conclusion

In this essay, I will be discussing whether the concept of god is incoherent and concluding that it is. I will discuss the problem of evil, the idea that the world must have a designer due to its complexity and my personal opinion.

If God exists as an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent being then why does evil exist in the world? For evil to exist god cannot be one all three of those things (which I will refer to as OOO for convenience) or there must be some reason why evil must exist. If any of the three Os were removed from the definition of God, he would cease to be God as we imagine him (e.g. if he wasn't omnibenevolent, he could be an omnipotent and omniscient demon). It can be argued that if humans did not have the

ability to perform evil acts, we would not have free will. In this case, a god that is OOC may choose to let evil exist. However, if God is omnipotent then and created everything then he must also have created the idea of morality and evil. If this is the case, he would not be omnibenevolent. Additionally, he could choose to get rid of the idea of evil perhaps without getting rid of our free will. Assuming that everything that can possibly exist does exist this would not be possible. However, if ~~the~~ everything that can ~~can~~ exist ~~exists~~ and we are not omniscient then we cannot choose to think about all of those things and therefore do not have complete freedom to choose what we do.

Another argument claims that God must exist because of how complex the world is. If you were to find a pocket watch on the ground you would assume that it has a designer due to how complex it is and its precise purpose. The world, however, does not have a clear and precise purpose for existing - it ~~merely~~ exists. There are many complex things that currently exist that we would not assume the existence of a designer for. For example, ~~something~~ ^{many things} that seems simple like rocks, ~~itself~~ are in fact very complex as everything is made up of atoms and

subatomic particles. It is ~~to~~ likely that we only think we'd assume that a pocket watch must have a designer because we know that people exist and can create complex things. Therefore, to assume that ~~that~~ ~~the~~ the world must have a designer, we must know that God exists so the argument is circular.

I personally think it is unlikely that a being that is ~~OC~~ exists ~~that~~ and it is irrational to assume or argue that it does. Science can now explain many of the phenomena we encounter and adding a being like God into the equation needlessly complicates things.

In conclusion, though I realise my arguments are somewhat biased, I cannot find any arguments for the existence of ~~of~~ a God convincing.

Commentary

There is an argument here, but it is not all focused on the relevant issues: there are substantial gaps in content, and it is (mostly) one sided. It sits at the top of the bottom band.

The student begins by stating their position, and identifying the problem of evil as one of the issues. This is fine, however the reference to 'design' suggests this essay is not going to be consistently well-focused on the central issues.

The problem of evil is grasped, and the free will defence offered. Both are brief but credit worthy. The last part of this evaluation, however, lacks precision.

The final argument that the student raises is just not relevant to the question, concerned as it is with the argument from design and responses to it. The conclusion does not answer the question, focussed as it is on the evidence for the existence of God rather than the coherence of the concept of God.

5 marks