



AS LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7061/1 Paper 1 Philosophy of Religion and Ethics
Report on the Examination

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Section A: Philosophy of Religion

Question 1.1

This question was very well answered by many students and attracted the highest marks of all the AO1 questions, some excellent full mark answers. The best answers explained the criticisms of the ontological argument coherently, demonstrating clear understanding and consistent application to the question. The most effective answers covered Gaunilo's criticism of the perfect island and both of Kant's criticisms; that existence is not a predicate, and his rejection of necessary existence.

Less effective answers explained some of the above criticisms or attempted to explain them but were unsuccessful. Less effective answers demonstrated weaker understanding of the criticisms and how they worked. In particular, some answers struggled to correctly explain why existence cannot be argued to necessary according to Kant, merely stating it, this demonstrated less knowledge and understanding.

Question 1.2

This was the least well answered AO2 question on average despite it being the most answered and accessible of all the AO2 questions. Most students clearly knew the cosmological argument well and could offer a range of arguments in agreement with the statement and also in contrast. The highest scoring answers clearly knew the criticisms of Hume and Russell and used them well to show how the argument can be disproved and then analysed these criticisms thoughtfully. Some excellent answers reflected on the concept of proof to develop their analysis well.

Some of the weaker answers could offer some points either in criticism of the argument or in support but then did not evaluate these points or make any critical comment. Some of the least successful answers either simply described the argument or confused the argument with the ontological argument.

Question 2.1

This question required students to explain why Process Theodicy and the Free Will Defence respond differently to the problem of evil and some answers simply described the different responses without any reference to reasons why. These answers were limited to maximum level 3 in the mark scheme. Higher scoring answers covered reasons why the theories differed, for example the view that in the Free Will Defence the possibility of evil is logically necessary, whereas in Process Theodicy evil is an inevitable outcome of creation, as a result of the process of persuasion rather than causation.

The answers accessing levels 4 and 5 of the levels of response focused directly on the question by giving reasons why these two theories respond to evil differently, this was the key issue in succeeding in this question.

Question 2.2

This question required students to evaluate the religious responses to the challenges of verification. There were answers which did this scored well and achieved levels 4 and 5. For example, many of these answers evaluated the effectiveness of Swinburne's Principles of credulity and testimony or the value of dramatic life changes caused by religious experiences.

A lot of answers however failed to focus on the religious responses and instead evaluated whether or not religious experiences were religious or natural in origin. These answers lacked application to the question and so could not climb the level descriptors. Some of these answers misused the term verification and did not seem to understand the meaning of the term.

Section B: Ethics

Question 3.1

This was on average the lowest scoring AO1 question. Students understood which ethical arguments were teleological and could identify them, most students used Virtue Ethics and Situation Ethics and explained relativism, extrinsic moral value and personalism as part of the teleological approach. The strongest answers identified one or more theories and explained the approaches to moral decision making of these theories, using good examples.

Less effective answers simply described an ethical theory without any reference to approaches to moral decision making for example the relativist approach.

Question 3.2

This question elicited the highest scores of the whole paper and the most full mark answers of all the AO2 questions. The best answers offered an impressive range of points in argument and support of the statement, using specific ethical theories and scholars to support their view. There was plenty of meaningful analysis and insightful evaluation.

Lower scoring answers offered some points in reference to the question but often lacked support from ethical theories or scholars, or they wasted too much time explaining the ethical issue of animals as a source of organs for transplants instead of evaluating the moral justification.

Question 4.1

This was the most accessible of all the AO1 questions with the majority of students able to score well by explaining Virtue ethics clearly and using good examples to demonstrate their knowledge. The most successful answers kept focus on the influence of the theory on the moral decision maker, demonstrated excellent application of their knowledge to the specific question, for example explaining that the focus on character encouraged people to focus on self-development.

The least successful answers did not address influence and simply described Virtue Ethics or demonstrated insufficient correct knowledge to move up the level descriptors. A small number of students answered this question with exclusive reference to Natural Moral Law and did not score well because these answers lacked relevance to the question.

Question 4.2

This question was answered by the majority of students, and most could offer points on both sides of the argument regarding intensive farming. However, to score well in this answer at levels 4 and 5 the key issue was knowledge and understanding of Situation Ethics. Those answers that remained focussed on Situation Ethics answered the question fully.

Less successful answers lost focus on Situation ethics and instead used a range of ethical theories to evaluate the issue. These answers lost marks as they were not clearly focused on the issues.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.