

GCE



CCEA GCE AS
Exemplifying Examination
Performance
Religious Studies

**AS 8: An Introduction to the Philosophy
of Religion**

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EXEMPLIFYING EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE

GCE Religious Studies

Introduction

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Students' grade A responses are reproduced verbatim and are accompanied by commentaries written by senior examiners. The commentaries draw attention to the strengths of the students' responses and indicate, where appropriate, deficiencies and how improvements could be made.

It is intended that the materials should provide a benchmark of candidate performance and help teachers and students to raise standards.

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Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

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GCE: AS Religious Studies

SRE81: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

Grade: A Exemplar

Section A

Answer **one** question from Section A

Q1a Discuss Aquinas's version of the Cosmological argument for the existence of God. [25]

Student's response

The Cosmological argument refers to many different arguments under the one school of thought. The word 'cosmos' describing the belief that the world was created as an ordered and well constructed design. Aquinas' argument was influenced by Aristotle's idea about a "Prime Mover". Aquinas wrote his argument in his book Summa Theologica where he came up with five ways in which to prove the existence of God. The first three make up the cosmological argument. The argument is a posteriori synthetic and deductive.

The first way is concerned with motion. This was not simply the movement of something from one place to another but was also considering change. Aquinas defined this change as the "reduction from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality". An analogy of a log was used to help explain this definition. While a log contains the potentiality to provide great heat, this heat can only be actualised by setting the log on fire. Aquinas sought to prove the existence of good by arguing that this chain of movement must have started somewhere by someone who themselves were not moving; an unmoved mover. Aquinas believes this to be God. This unmoved mover began the chain of movement, thus Aquinas rejected the idea of infinite regress.

The second way Aquinas' version of the cosmological argument for the existence of God was concerned with cause. He believed that nothing came into existence without a cause, but these causes must all go back to a start; an uncaused cause. Once again the rejection of infinite regress means Aquinas points to God as the uncaused cause.

Aquinas' third way directly links to this as he argues that since God's existence was uncaused it must therefore be necessary. As Copleston describes it, "God cannot exist". This issue of God's necessary existence upon which all contingent beings are reliant upon, is one of the most discussed sections of Aquinas' version of the Cosmological argument. He argued that contingent beings could not infinitely regress, there must be one being whose existence is necessary and that being is God.

Examiner's comments

The candidate begins by defining the term 'Cosmological', acknowledging the fact that there are multiple versions of this argument and identifying the type of argument (as for example a posteriori and synthetic). The influence of Aristotle on Aquinas' thought is identified and Aquinas text is named. The candidate then details Aquinas' 3 Ways dedicating one paragraph to each Way. Each Way is successfully delineated in some depth with each premise within the three Ways successfully identified. Relevant scholarly views are provided for example Copleston's statement supporting Aquinas' argument. The 'fire and wood' analogy is particularly well handled by the candidate, as is Aquinas' rejection of infinite regression. The response is succinct but very much to the point and demonstrates a strong grasp of Aquinas' Cosmological argument.

Q1b Comment on the claim that the “proofs” for the existence of God will always fail to convince the unbeliever. Justify your answer. [25]

Student's response

Many would argue that “proofs” for the existence of God such as the cosmological and ontological arguments only seek to provide reasoning for a person who already has faith and do little to convince an unbeliever such as an atheist or agnostic.

Some would support the arguments of Hume who suggested that “deductive leaps” are often made in proofs that seek to prove God’s existence such as in the cosmological argument where Aquinas provides little if any evidence to suggest why his “unmoved mover” is God. The unbeliever may argue that leaps in knowledge such as these suggest a desperate need to justify what many would view as “blind faith”. Scientific explanation is often needed in order to convince an unbeliever as they may think it is logically impossible to believe in both science and faith. However Aquinas’ cosmological argument can work with both as it is open to the suggestion that God created the Big Bang as an event that led to the cosmos and carefully ordered world. Arguments such as these may be more convincing for those unbelievers who rely heavily on reason and logic.

In the ontological argument, a direct address is made to the unbeliever as it is written as a response to the fool “who tells himself there is no God”. This argument believes that even if an atheist speaks only of God to dismiss his existence, the fact that an understanding of God is there proves his existence in the mind. Since God is a perfect being, “that than which nothing greater can be conceived” means that he must exist as he would not be considered perfect if he did not exist. Many unbelievers would support the views that oppose this argument highlighting that it is wrong to see existence as a predicate – however it could be argued that many unbelievers do view existence as a predicate as they argue it is a quality not possessed by God, as he does not exist in their belief.

However many would argue that the ‘proofs’ for the existence of God will always fail to convince the unbeliever as many atheists struggle with the idea that if a God does exist, why would he let such suffering and misery continue to prevail in our world? Stephen Fry has spoken out about his beliefs on this issue and describes God as “evil and monstrous” listing many causes of suffering such as “bone cancer in children” that he believes the classical God of theism should never allow to exist.

Examiner's comments

The candidate goes straight to the heart of the debate by distinguishing the primary audience for the Classical proofs. There is very good reference to scholarly views, both explicitly and implicitly referenced, within this response. The candidate explores both the strengths and the weakness of both the ontological and cosmological argument in convincing the nonbeliever. To Concise and very relevant quotations are employed within this response helping to form a well informed and coherent debate. The candidate's response is well structured and the counterclaim clearly identified as such. It is good to see contemporary thinkers such as Stephen Fry referenced in the candidates answer. In both sections of this essay the candidate addresses the task set, showing good focus of responses

Q2a "It is impossible to justify the suffering of the innocent."

Examine this statement with particular reference to the work of modern writers you have studied. [25]

Student's response

According to Ivan Karamonzar, it is never justifiable to argue that evil and suffering is justifiable as it involves innocent children suffering. The essential problem of suffering stems from Gods attributes such as if God is omnipotent, he should be able to stop suffering. As Swinburne says God is like a loving parent who wants the best for his children. Also, if God is omniscient then he should know how to stop evil and suffering, however evil and suffering do exist therefore this raises philosophical problems. Natural Evil and Moral Evil are the main reasons for atheists not to believe in God as have stated the problem is the 'rock of atheism'. Similarly, Epicum asked the question, 'Is God able to prevent evil and not able then he impotent.' Similarly, the theist Augustine claimed 'to her God cannot abolish evil or he will not. If he will not he is not all good and if he cannot he is not all powerful. Whithead the theodocist claimed that suffering is never justifiable in a world that should be used for the happiness of others. However, she makes the claim that 'God is the follow sufferer who understands'.

For atheists such as Darwins, he claims that 'religion isn't plausabile in a world replaced by religion and claims 'faith is the great cop out'. Mackie highlight the conflicting claims of the believer through his analogy of the inconsitant triad, in that the conjunction of any two entails the negation of the third. This raises further philosophical problems as it is counter intuitve to argue that natural and moral don't exist when it is empirically real.

The theologian father Augustine claimed 'A good God created a good world for a good purpose.' He stated that 'evil is the sin or just punishment for sin'. Therefore he claims how evil and suffering can be justified as he handed us over free will. As Hick claimed, Although God give us a world with unpredictable contingencies, he handed us over free will. Free will is the main strength for Christian theists because it was mans own choice to choose to disobey God at the fall which resulted in evil for the rest of the world as sin is seminally present and now we are the 'loins of Adam'. However, Hick argues that we should not suffer as the result of our mans choice.

Irenaeus attempts to justify suffering by claiming the perfection will be continued in the after life in universal salvation in Heaven. However, critics argue that even universal salvation isn't justifiable because even if the end result is gauranted, this is no comfort to those who have suffered. Therefore some believe evil and suffering is elitist and many suffer with only little benefit.

Mackie claims that believers change God's attributes and adapt then to fit in with attributes, for example God's love isn't human love. Therefore Tilley said that 'theodicies devolve human suffering by offering abstract arguments.

Swinburne argued for the free will defence and said that natural evil was necessary for humans to have knowledge of evil and know how to avoid it e.g. not build near a volcano. Swinburne also claimed that death was necessary because it allows us to develop perfection.

However, I think that evil can be dysteleological and sometimes bad things come from suffering e.g. the Holocaust. Elie Wiesel claimed 'The Holocaust turned my dreams to dust'.

Therefore in conclusion, I agree that suffering is justifiable because we were handed over free will even if we suffer because it. As Hick said 'We cannot be in a world with both free will and evil. I think this is better than Plantinga's 'goodness of robots' because love wouldn't be genuine. However, I agree with Mackie who claim 'could God not have sped up the process?'

Examiner's comments

The candidate begins by identifying the quotation prefacing this question by naming the relevant character within Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov. The candidate sets the scene by identifying the central problem of human suffering for the theist i.e. the Inconsistent Triad. Swinburne's analogy of the loving parent is explored in response to the Epicurean Paradox. The candidate also identifies two forms of evil moral and natural within their opening paragraph. Modern scholarly views are explored within this response including the views of Process Theodicy and the contribution of Whitehead. Dawkins rejection of the God of Classical theism in the face of evil and suffering is referenced within this response as is Mackie's contribution to the debate. The candidate also explores the Freewill Defense, citing Hick and Swinburne's views in doing so. This response very successfully integrates often diverse scholarly views into a well-structured and very coherent answer, Eli Wiesel's words are particularly well used to support the candidate's own views on the issue of innocent suffering. While at times the candidate explores the Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies, which cannot be accepted as the contribution of modern writers, nonetheless this is a very successful band 5 response.

Q2b Assess the claim that the Irenaean theodicy provides the best solution to evil and suffering. Justify your answer. [25]

Student's response

Irenaeus' theodicy is soul making because evil and suffering is teleological. This means it would bring us closer to over development to help us find perfection. The claims we are part of a two stage process and the world contains deliberate flaws so the world was never perfect. This therefore allows explanation for logical problems such as 'How did a perfect God who created a perfect world go so wrong'. Schleiermacher proposed this claim.

I disagree that evil is teleological because sometimes suffering can bring evil such as Swinburne who claims; 'The Holocaust gave the Jews a wonderful opportunity to be brave and courageous.' Atkins reply to this was 'may you rot in Hell.' Swinburne seemed insensitive to the huge evil and the little benefit that came from it. However, CS Lewis claims 'Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world.'

Despite this Irenaeus claimed that firstly we were made in the 'image of God' – intelligent yet lacked God's maturity and 'like God' – morally and spiritually perfect against a long process of struggle against their hostile environment.'

A further strength, of Irenaeus' theodicy is how it protects God's attributes. God remains all powerful because he can intervene but chooses not to and he remains omniscience because he knows this is the 'best possible world' for humans, despite the consequences. Swinburne argues that that is far better than living in a world where our contribution to the world wouldn't be genuine.

Additionally, the Irenaeus theodicy removes the moral difficulties such as Hell because there is universal salvation whereas in Augustine's' theodicy, moral difficulties exist as Hell seems to contradict an all loving God for those who don't 'choose' correctly.

Irenaeus' theodicy is also more optimistic as it shows how the world was never perfect. The main strength of the theodicy in my opinion is how it allows for free will. This is because we will develop greater goods such as love.

Hick also developed the Irenaean theodicy and claimed believers are religiously ambiguous' and God remains at an epistemic distance to allow humans to fully grow and develop. However, sometimes God seems so distant that people wonder if He exist at all. I agree Hicks solution as D2 phillips said 'God and suffering are beyond

human understanding'. This is because I think God is a superior human being and no one will ever know why God allows evil and suffering. Tilley argues that 'theodicyists Offer abstract arguments and devalue human suffering.'

The anti-theodicist Soelle claims that we must talk to the victim and help them in their pain'. Russel claimed that the universe is a 'brute fact' and therefore I feel that there is a 'brute fact' to why there is ill and suffering. However, I feel that Irenaeus' attempt to overcome this problem is the best solution to overcome it.

Therefore, in conclusion I agree that the Irenaean theodicy is the best solution for evil and suffering as he removes both logical and moral problems of natural and moral evil. I think process theodicy is also a good solution because it shows how the universe is in continuous creativity and sometimes produces good and sometimes produces bad. Therefore, process theodicy believes God is in process and suffers along side us. Hick claims 'God of the great elite or the great and successful.' However, this theodicy may not be considered a true theodicy as it removes God's attribute of being all powerful, which is inconsistent with the Bible, whereas Irenaeus' theodicy is based on Genesis 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness', therefore it still remains the best theodicy.

Examiner's comments

This is an excellent response, the candidate moves directly and very effectively to the evaluative task set namely an analysis of the success and/or weaknesses of the Irenaean theodicy. The candidate explores very relevant scholarly views including those of Schleiermacher, Swinburne, Atkins, C S Lewis, Tilley, Russell among others, and uses these to very successfully to sustain their debate. The candidate is able to cite both the strengths and weaknesses of the Irenaean theodicy in some considerable depth. The examples cited such as Hick's argument concerning the necessity of God remaining at an epistemic distance from humanity, are extremely relevant and serve to further their debate. Brief and very apt scholarly quotations are well integrated within this response developing the candidate's argument. The candidate rounds off their debate citing Genesis 1:26, the bedrock of the Irenaean theodicy.

Section B

Answer **one** question from Section B

Q3a Explain how different Christians understand the concept of miracle. [25]

Student's response

There are various forms of the definition of a miracle. Hume defined miracles as "violations of the laws of nature". Hume believed that miracles were extremely unlikely to be true as they break the laws of nature. The laws of nature are fixed as they have been proven by repeated experiments, according to Hume. Therefore there could never be sufficient evidence to prove that a miracle occurred because these are one-off events that supposedly happen.

However, Hick believes that perhaps miracles don't break the laws of nature as humans just haven't discovered all the laws yet. So maybe the laws of nature should be updated or a new one created.

Swinebourne's understanding of the concept of a miracle was different to Hume's in that a law of nature is not broken. He describes them as a "counter-instance to the laws of nature". Therefore laws haven't been broken, just our understanding of physics has not expanded yet.

Hume didn't believe in miracles as he thought that there wasn't enough witnesses. For example, only St. Bernadette seen Mary appear at Lourdes, so it can't be proved as a miracle. Also, the feeding of the 5000 cannot be justified, as if God could share food with them, but world hunger is a major problem today.

Other Christians believe Hume is being insulting as he says anyone who believes in miracles is uneducated and deluded.

Tillich calls miracles "signs" from God which prove his existence the the person who receives the sign. Early Christians never referred to the intervention of God as 'miracles' but "signs", so Tillich believes we should refocus.

Holland believed 'miracles' were just "coincidences" that hold religious significance be the religious believer. He uses the example: a boy gets his pedal of his stuck on a train track. A train is approaching and can't see the boy, so wouldn't be able to stop in time. However, suddenly the train stops metres from the boy. The mother sees this and calls it a miracle, giving it religious significance. But, this was actually just a significance with reasoning to explain it. The train driver has fainted, taking his hand off a lever which is designed to automatically stop in case of an accident. He had fainted due to a heavy lunch after he fought with a colleague. This causes his

blood pressure to be high, giving him a blood clot, making him faint. However, the mother will still hold this as a religious event.

Wiles disagrees with both Tillich and Holland as miracles aren't signs, there are direct intervention from God. Also, miracles are not coincidences as everything that ever happened in life could be called a coincidence of a sequence of events. This would cancel out the religious importance of miracles. Richard Dawkins believe miracles are the placebo effect.

Examiner's comments

The candidate begins by citing Hume's classic definition of the term miracle before exploring a range of differing Christian views concerning miracle. The views of Swinburne, Hick, Holland, Tillich and Wiles are explored within this response. The candidate demonstrates an awareness of Christian views both supporting and challenging the validity of miracles. The arbitrary nature of Divine intervention, for example, is discussed, as is the claim that miracles may be best described as coincidences. Holland's train analogy is both explored and challenged. The candidate cites very relevant examples within their answer and briefly discusses theism's response to an atheistic critique of miracle. This response demonstrates a very high degree of understanding of diverse Christian teaching on miracle.

Q3b “A fully scientific understanding of the world has ruled out the possibility of miracles.”

Assess the truth of this claim with reference to other aspects of human experience. Justify your answer. [25]

Student's response

There is some truth in the claim that “a fully scientific understanding of the world has ruled out the possibility of miracles.”

In the past, when there were gaps in the knowledge of understanding our world, people filled them with ‘miracles’. However, in the 18th century, scientific development increased our understanding and decreased the possibility of miracles.

However, some things still can't be explained, and so are called miracles. There have been countless claims of miracles occurring at Lourdes, the catholic shrine in South France. But only 69 have been deemed unexplainable and so are miracles. At Lourdes there is a committee of scientists who meet annually to investigate claims of miracles and try to find explanations. If they can't find a reason for something occurring, the catholic church calls it a miracle. Doctor Moron from Belfast recently joined their team of scientists and doctors. Even though he is catholic, faith must be kept separate from reason when accessing claims.

An example of a ‘miracle’ at Lourdes was when Jeanne Frettle went to Lourdes. She has tuberculosis and was paralysed, but was completely healed of her illness when at Lourdes. No one could explain with science how this occurred and so it much have been a miracle by God.

Also, Marrion Corrol was cured of her multiple sclerosis when at knock on a pilgrimage.

However, the fact that only 69 miracles have occurred at Lourdes is questionable as millions of ill people go every year in hope of a cure. So why would God cure some, but not others? Richard Dawkins suggests this is the placebo effect as people who believe they will get healed, convince themselves and so they heal themselves. This is mind over body which is a scientific theory not fully understood yet. For example, Joshua Martin from Belfast had cancer and was from a hugely religious family. Everyday he was prayed for, but still in 2013 he died.

Examiner's comments

The candidate successfully integrates other aspects of human experience within this debate as the task demands. The candidate directly addresses the debate issue – namely that a scientific understanding of the world has ruled out the possibility of miracles. The candidate references the concept of a God-of-the gaps mentality. Information concerning miracles cited in Lourdes is well handled with the candidate exploring the verification process and the total number of miracles claimed, before briskly exploring a specific healing example from Lourdes. Dawkins challenges to Lourdes miracles was very appropriately discussed within the candidates answer. Finally, the candidate explores the impact of the placebo effect on healing miracles in particular. Overall this was a very good response to the evaluation task set.

Q4a Explain and discuss John Hick's views on religious pluralism. [25]

QUESTION NOT SELECTED BY EXAMINER

Q4b With reference to other aspects of human experience, evaluate the view that the solution to the world's problems is to be found in atheism and secularisation. Justify your answer. [25]

QUESTION NOT SELECTED BY EXAMINER



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

