



AS-Level

Religious Studies

7061/1 Philosophy of religion and ethics

Report on the examination

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General Comments

All questions were marked with direct reference to the published Level Descriptors for AO1 and AO2.

There were some very accomplished scripts for this paper, and some outstanding individual answers. Students demonstrated AO1 knowledge and understanding of topics generally comparable to previous years, and most were able to discuss alternative views for AO2 answers. A few students seem to have struggled this year to identify the focus of some questions, or to recall relevant and accurate knowledge. In the ethics questions it was clear that some students had less understanding of situation ethics and virtue ethics, in comparison to natural moral law, in the way they approached the questions.

1.1 Explain the approach to proving the existence of God taken by Anselm's ontological argument.

Most students were able to discuss Anselm's ontological argument well. There were many excellent answers which explained the philosophical approach of the ontological argument recalling its basis in a priori knowledge and deductive reasoning. Fewer students also explained that the argument is an analytic proof of the existence of God. Less successful answers tended to explain Anselm's argument without reference to any philosophical approach. Some students confused Anselm's ontological argument and Paley's analogical argument or Aquinas' third way and so gained no credit. The best answers made points which explained the philosophical nature of Anselm's argument and used the argument to demonstrate those points.

1.2 'The problem of evil successfully challenges belief in God'.

There were many excellent answers to this question which critically analysed and evaluated the claim using challenges from both the logical and evidential problem of evil and/or weaknesses of theodicies. These answers came to reasoned conclusions which were focused on challenges to belief in God and thus accessed the higher-level descriptors (Level 4 and 5). Some students gave only a one-sided response to the claim either agreeing or disagreeing with reasoning, however lacking any counter argument they did not achieve Level 3 covering different points of view. Some students simply juxtaposed contrary argument with no comment on the success of either view which is required for the higher-level descriptors (Level 4 and 5). Some students made no reference to the challenge to belief in God, and instead focused on the existence of God, which gained less credit than those answers that did focus on belief.

2.1 Explain the nature of numinous experiences with reference to Otto.

Most student were able to explain numinous experiences according to Otto, referencing *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. There were some excellent answers which explained Otto's work in detail recalling the non-rational and sui generis nature of numinous experience. Less successful answers tended to recall the terminology of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* but could not correctly explain them. Some students confused numinous experiences with

mysticism and visions and therefore received no credit. This question was the most commonly AO1 omitted question across the paper. The most successful answers could accurately recall and explain, in detail, the nature of numinous experiences with reference to Otto.

2.2 'Challenges to religious experience from science undermine religious belief.'

There were many excellent answers to this question which addressed how religious belief in religious experience was undermined by science, referencing relevant scientists' work. These answers then made excellent counter criticism of either the scientific work or how the challenge did not undermine religious belief due to the nature of belief. Less successful answers could either only show how religious belief was not undermined or show how religious belief was undermined without any critical comment or counter argument, thus achieving only Level 2. Some students did not address religious belief, and instead only considered whether the religious experiences were genuine or not, which limited their response to 'general' (Level 3). This question was the most common AO2 omitted question across the paper.

3.1 Explain how Situation Ethics influences moral decision making.

This question requires students to demonstrate the influence of situation ethics on moral decision making, and the majority of students could do this to some extent. There was excellent recall and understanding of situation ethics. Excellent answers kept the focus on influence by explaining how decisions are made relativistically, consequentially and in line with the demands of agape love. Lower scoring answers were general in their explanation of situation ethics, not addressing the influences. Some students confused situation ethics with natural moral law, explaining its influence, and so gained no credit. The best answers were able to use their knowledge of situation ethics to demonstrate well how moral decisions would be made using this theory.

3.2'Situation Ethics does not allow the use of animals as a source of organs for transplants.'

Most students could critically assess this claim and considered reasons why situation ethics would and would not allow the use of animals as a source of organs for transplants. These answers focused on the specific challenges of issues surrounding organs for transplants, such as potential for organ rejection, the success rate of such transplants, and viable alternatives. Some students, however, did not consider the particular issues regarding xenotransplantation and instead focused on the use of animals for human gain in general, and so demonstrated less focus on the question. Some students could only give a one-sided view from situation ethics, gaining less credit. The best answers also dealt with the difference between the value of human and animal life to further evaluate the claim.

4.1 Explain why Natural Moral Law and Virtue Ethics might reach different conclusions about abortion.

Most students were able to explain to some degree why the two theories might reach different conclusions about abortion. There were some outstanding answers which gave multiple clear reasons for difference between the two theories on the issue of abortion and supported points with reference to scholars' work or effective examples. Less well scoring answers explained the two theories, then made brief reference to their difference on the issue of abortion. Marks for answers that only referred to one ethical theory were constrained by the levels of response criteria; although generally accurate and relevant on one theory (Level 3), there was limited application to the question (Level 2). Some students either did not reference abortion, or did not reference the relevant scholars, preferring instead to use situation ethics or non-specific attitudes to abortion. The best answers could explain why the theories reach different conclusions on abortion accurately.

4.2 'Animals should not be used for food.'

There were many outstanding answers to this question. Students took a range of approaches in their answers. Some made arguments using a range of normative ethical theories to both support and oppose the claim, while others used only one ethical theory in detail to assess the claim. Many students used the different status of animals in ethical theories and religious beliefs to make critical comment successfully. Some students gave only a one-sided response to the statement, so were unable to gain higher than Level 2. Some students made little reference to any ethical theory, instead giving personal views about the use of animals, and so struggled to score highly because these answers lacked reasoning and justification.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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