



A-Level

Religious Studies

7062/1 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. Students demonstrated AO1 knowledge and understanding of topics generally comparable to previous years, and most were able to discuss alternative views for AO2 answers. It was also encouraging to see that comments made in earlier examination reports about how to provide critical analysis in AO2 answers, for Level 4 and above, have been taken on board and there were less formulaic answers in evidence this year. There were many very accomplished scripts for this paper, and some outstanding individual answers. There were fewer non-attempted or multiple non-attempted answers than in previous years. However, this year some students appear to have struggled to identify the focus of questions, or to understand specification language and technical terminology.

Section A: Philosophy of religion.

1.1 Examine the approach of the cosmological argument to proving the existence of God.

The assessment objective for this question was assessment objective AO1:4, 'Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including approaches to the study of religion and belief.' This question proved accessible to most students, however, there were several answers which merely unpacked various versions of the cosmological argument but neglected to key into the precise focus of the question which required an examination of the approach taken by the cosmological argument. A cap was inserted in the mark scheme that limited such answers to a maximum of Level 3. Most students were able to gain at least a low-end Level 3 on this question. Those who focussed on the precise demands of the question and clearly examined the approach of the cosmological argument produced some excellent answers and top level 5 answers were not uncommon.

1.2 'Miracles have little significance for religion.' Evaluate this claim.

This question proved accessible to all but the lower-level students. The question produced a wide range of responses, but there were very few unsuccessful answers. The key focus of this question was the significance of miracles for religion. The top answers engaged with that demand of the question well and produced good evaluations of the statement. At the lower end of the mark scheme, students wrote more about the likelihood of miracles occurring, or an extended narration of realist and anti-realist approaches towards miracles rather than keying into the significance of miracles for religion

2.1 Examine the possibility of continuing personal existence after death.

There were many very good and clear answers to this question. Some students wrote at length and provided a clear examination of a wide range of views with good reference to the

work of a variety of scholars. Many answers achieved at least Level 4 7 marks, and there were a number of very good answers which scored full marks. Less successful answers were typified by a general examination of the possibility of life after death and neglected to key into the 'personal existence' part of the question.

2.2 'Mystical experiences cannot be verified.' Evaluate this claim.

Focus on the precise demands of the question proved a downfall for many. This was the least successful of the AO2 questions in the philosophy of religion section. The question asked for a specific understanding of, and an evaluation about, the possible verification of mystical experiences, and not religious experiences in general. Those who were able to focus on mystical experiences precisely produced good and clear answers. Such answers were able to demonstrate good knowledge of mystical experiences, provide good examples of such experiences and refer to, and quote precisely, the views of a variety of scholars particularly James and Stace, and provided clear evaluation of both sides of the argument for verification. At the lower end of the mark range students wrote in very general terms about the possible verification of religious experiences rather than focussing with precision on mystical experiences. A cap in the mark scheme prevented such answers from progressing beyond Level 2 'a limited response to the issue raised'.

Section B: Ethics and religion

3.1 Examine why Virtue Ethics and Situation Ethics may make different moral decisions.

This question tested assessment objective AO1.3 'Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice.' Students were clearly well prepared for this question and there were only very few low-scoring answers in evidence. Most students clearly understood and could explain both ethical systems and were able to provide clear and supported exemplified evidence as to why Virtue Ethics and Situation Ethics might come to different conclusions over a variety of moral issues. There were very few unsuccessful answers to this question. This was the AO1 question that produced the greatest number of high-level AO1 answers on this year's paper.

3.2 'Moral values are self-evident.' Evaluate this claim.

The key focus of this question was on meta-ethics. This is an area of the specification that requires improvement for many students. Many responses focussed solely on the role of conscience in making moral decisions, rather than focussing upon the precise demands of the question. Where students keyed into the precise focus of the question asked, they produced a good range of debate supported by good critical analysis and were able to refer to the work of key scholars accurately and wisely. Less successful answers which managed to key into at least part of the demands of the question often focussed on the ethical naturalist versus the naturalistic fallacy debate, with little further development. Such answers were able to get towards the top of Level 3 but lacked sufficient development, focus or critical analysis to progress further. This question recorded the highest number of non-attempted answers and was, on reflection, the least successfully answered of the AO2 questions overall.

4.1 Examine how Natural Moral Law can be applied to cloning.

Virtually all students, with very few exceptions, were able to describe and explain Natural Moral Law, and there was little confusion of what constitutes NML. The key problem, for many students, was a clear and accurate understanding of the term cloning, particularly when applied to humans. There was often confusion between therapeutic cloning, which was creditable, and 'saviour siblings', or infertility treatments involving IVF, which were not. The very best answers, were able to provide wide ranging and accurate examination of how NML might be applied to human and to animal cloning. The least successful answers were those which struggled to understand the term cloning with sufficient accuracy.

4.2 'Teleological approaches to moral decision making are effective. Evaluate this claim.'

This question was very well answered in the main, and drew many very good and high scoring responses. For some, the accurate use of the terms teleological and deontological proved difficult; often the terms were confused or reversed. For others the problem was addressing the effectiveness or otherwise of teleological approaches. However, even such answers were able to produce general responses to the issue raised and score Level 3. At the top end of the mark range there was a good number of well argued, well-reasoned and very well focused answers in evidence, which had little difficulty in achieving full marks. At the lowest end of the mark range, there was a surprising and significant number of answers which had confused the teleological argument for the existence of God with teleological approaches to moral decision making, and tried to produce inventive but irrelevant answers to fit the question asked.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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