



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. 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 understand specification language.

This year, it was evident that an increased number of students had clearly adopted a formulaic approach towards the inclusion of critical analysis to get into level 4 or above. Assuming that critical analysis could be achieved by adding on to each paragraph ‘This is a weak/ strong argument...’. Where this led to genuine critical analysis it was credited. However, some students who adopted this formulaic approach did not understand that there needs to be some meaningful reflection on the evidence or argument presented, in the context of a dialogue between alternative viewpoints. Simply saying ‘this is a weak argument because some people disagree with it’ does not constitute critical analysis.

Section A: Philosophy of religion**1.1 Examine Anselm’s ontological argument for the existence of God.****[10 marks]**

For students who knew Anselm’s ontological argument this proved a very accessible question. There were some excellent answers which provided a thorough and detailed examination of Anselm’s argument. However, two common faults were evident in how some students tackled the question. A) The most common mistake in answering this question came from students who had not read through the questions carefully before starting to write their responses. 1.1 asked students to provide an examination of Anselm’s argument, and 1.2 focussed on an evaluation of whether the argument had been disproved. In several responses 1.1 and 1.2 morphed into each other. In 1.1 credit was only awarded when criticisms of Anselm’s argument, for example Gaunilo’s criticism, were relevant to a wider examination of his ontological argument. B) A significant number of students had little idea of Anselm’s ontological argument or confused it with other arguments for the existence of God. These students often wrote at great length about the teleological or the cosmological arguments for the existence of God, but all received no credit for doing so.

1.2 ‘Anselm’s argument for the existence of God has been disproved’**Evaluate this claim.’****[15 marks]**

Students who knew Anselm’s argument and the key criticisms of it were able to write clear and well-focussed answers. The majority were clearly able to demonstrate and articulate differing views and achieved level 3 easily. At the top end, there were many excellent answers that demonstrated very clear, well thought out critical analysis which was deployed effectively in response to the question asked. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph ‘This is a weak/ strong argument’ with little or no supporting content. Weaker evaluations were often little more than partially reasoned opinion. The weakest students who had demonstrated confusion about arguments for the existence of God in 1.1, often did so again in 1.2.

2.1 Examine different understandings of the relationship between the body and the soul.

[10 marks]

For all but the weakest of students this proved a very accessible question and virtually all students addressed at least two different understandings of the body soul relationship as demanded by the question. However, several answers resulted in simply ‘describing’ rather than ‘examining’ the different understandings of the body soul relationship and were unable to show sufficient evidence of a developed examination of these ideas to progress beyond level 3.

2.2 ‘Hare’s theory of Bliks shows that religious language is meaningful.’

Evaluate this claim.

[15 marks]

For students who understood Hare’s theory of Bliks this was a very accessible question. Most students were able to show how Hare’s theory could be deployed to show the meaningfulness of religious language and to contrast this with differing views about religious language and thus achieved level 3 with ease. Others, who understood the wider issues surrounding religious language well, were able to offer clear, precise and well-crafted evaluations of the statement. It was observed that some weaker answers contented themselves with a very narrative approach. Such answers usually focussed mainly on a narration of Hare’s ‘Parable of the Lunatic,’ contrasting this with an equally narrative presentation of Flew’s ‘Parable of the Gardener’ but progressed little further than that in terms of offering differing views. At the lower end the weakest responses were typified by a very basic understanding of Blik’s and the inability to construct any evaluation for or against the statement in relation to the meaningfulness of religious language.

Section B: Ethics and religion.

3.1 Examine the approach to the meaning of right and wrong taken by Utilitarianism.

[10 marks]

The target of this question tested assessment objective AO1.4. This required more than a simple description of Utilitarianism. The very best answers focussed precisely on the demands of the question and included metaethical consideration of Utilitarian ethics as a naturalist ethical approach to right and wrong. Such answers were able to provide clear and detailed examination of how Utilitarianism approached the meaning of right and wrong. However, not all student’s focussed sufficiently tightly on the wording of the question and merely described Utilitarianism in general terms. Such answers were restricted from going any further than Level 3. The weakest answers typically exhibited only a very limited unpacking of ‘good’ was that which brought pleasure, and/or the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

3.2 ‘Virtue ethics cannot solve the moral problems of voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide.’**Evaluate this claim.****[15 marks]**

This question drew the widest range of responses of all the AO2 evaluation questions on the paper. Those who read the wording of the question carefully and had a good understanding of Virtue ethics produced well- focussed or very well-focussed and perceptive responses that concluded with an appropriate evaluation clearly supported by the reasoning shown throughout the answer. Not all students read the statement carefully enough. Instead, some thought the focus of the question was ‘Virtue ethics cannot *allow* voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide,’ rather than ‘*cannot solve the problems of...*,’ and thus their evaluations were often at variants to the demands of the question set. Where appropriate, credit was given for all *relevant* points made. Many of these answers managed to get to the various tiers of level 3. Answers at the lowest levels typically displayed little understanding of, or focus on, Virtue ethics. Others, wrote at length about the approach to the issues highlighted taken by Natural Moral Law or Situation Ethics, and any reference to Virtue ethics was either cursory or incidental.

4.1 Examine the causes and significance of different beliefs about conscience.**[10 marks]**

The target of this question was AO1.3. This required a focus on both causes *and* significance. Clear focus on the latter part of this assessment objective, in relation to the question, was the downfall of many otherwise excellent answers. Few students had any difficulty in providing clear and detailed understanding of the causes of different beliefs about conscience. Virtually all responses were able to show knowledge and understanding of a variety of causes, both religious and secular. However, only the very best answers were able to offer responses which included any detailed or relevant knowledge of how beliefs about the conscience might be significant. In several cases any focus on significance was totally absent. Others merely said, ‘and this is significant,’ without offering any further meaningful explanation or development as to why. In both cases these answers were restricted to a maximum of level 3 as general answers which failed to cover both aspects of the question.

4.2 ‘People should not be rewarded or punished for their moral decisions.’**Evaluate this claim.****[15 marks]**

In response to this question students produced many well focused and excellent answers. For whatever reason, this question produced the best examples of critical analysis across all the evaluative questions. It was clearly a question that students were well prepared for, and one with which they could engage and present different views with confidence, and in many cases with genuine critical analysis. The statement at the heart of the question, was one that students clearly felt strongly about, and they responded accordingly. Overall, most students produced responses which met the criteria for level 3 and above. There were very few weak answers in evidence. Most students responded as expected by the indicative content of the mark scheme. However, there were some answers which took an unexpected, but totally valid, approach to the question asked. Such answers were, in accordance with the assessment criteria, assessed upon their merits in responding to the question in accord with the generic levels of response for AO2 questions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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