



Examiners' Report

June 2024

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 01

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications come from Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk.

Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.



Giving you insight to inform next steps

ResultsPlus is Pearson's free online service giving instant and detailed analysis of your students' exam results.

- See students' scores for every exam question.
- Understand how your students' performance compares with class and national averages.
- Identify potential topics, skills and types of question where students may need to develop their learning further.

For more information on ResultsPlus, or to log in, visit www.edexcel.com/resultsplus. Your exams officer will be able to set up your ResultsPlus account in minutes via Edexcel Online.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk.

June 2024

Publications Code 9RS0_01_2406_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024

Introduction

This year there were some excellent, erudite and well-argued responses.

Candidates revealed thorough knowledge, good assessment and analysis and impressive awareness of the links to other papers in Question (Q) 04. Candidates made good use of the Anthology material in Q03 but also in other questions where it was relevant, which was pleasing to note.

Again, this year, at the highest level, candidates presented answers that drew on a range of detailed and carefully employed knowledge to deconstruct the issues and offer clear and sustained reasoning and judgement in relation to the question. This was achieved through reviewing and analysing the strengths and weaknesses of different views and forming clear judgements. There was a good range of subject-specific terminology and a variety of scholarship used well in many responses.

Many of the candidates who wrote more than the time and space allowed for in both Q01 and Q02 did not have sufficient time in other questions; this can improve with continued centre-based practice.

Candidates generally wrote well in questions that required the AO2 skills ('Assess,' 'Analyse' and 'Evaluate'). Unfortunately, and consequently self-penalising for many, some candidates merely outlined content rather than offered assessment or evaluated differing positions, therefore they were unable to score very highly. This is an area that centres continue to need to focus on in order for candidates to reach the higher marks available.

There were some excellent responses to the anthology extract in Q03(a) but it is still worth reminding candidates to make careful reading of the extract in the examination room and thus ensure confident knowledge of the position of respective contributors to debates, to avoid confusion. Candidates were able to 'Clarify' well for the most part although the tendency to 'translate' or repeat the passage is still evident for some candidates. The extract should be seen as an opportunity to expand on ideas raised and set them in context of the wider topic, whilst not straying too far from the text itself. Candidates 'refer to the passage' most effectively when it is in short bursts rather than extended lengthy quotations, which then only repeat the content.

The synoptic link element of Q04 was handled well by very many candidates. Unfortunately, it still did not appear in some answers therefore limiting the candidates from reaching the higher mark band in the mark scheme. This link was most effective when signposted and then elaborated in a short paragraph or two on how the topics linked to each other. Some responses created this link throughout an essay, with some considerable skill.

Finally, there are areas that would benefit from centre attention: balancing the amount of time spent on each question is one area candidates can improve upon. Paying close attention to the wording of the question and avoiding presenting material not relevant or not required will also help with timing and focus issues.

The trigger words indicate the balance of AO1 and AO2 required in each type of question and the amount of space provided is an indication of how much time should be spent. A limitation on space encourages candidates to keep to this and to focus their writing for the number of marks available.

Question 1

This question saw a variety of responses and proved to be a good discriminator.

Some candidates tried to present a much larger essay rather than carefully selecting a few features to discuss in some detail, which would have been a more appropriate strategy.

Some responses included AO2 style comment, which is not required in an 8 mark 'Explore' question. This prevented candidates including more relevant AO1 material.

Good answers offered detailed knowledge and understanding of *a posteriori* arguments by discussing key features of structure and then identifying relevant aspects of the Design and Cosmological Arguments that reflected *a posteriori* features.

Weaker responses were 'padded-out' by outlining the Design Argument and the Cosmological Argument. Key words/features/concepts were missed and not applied to detailed descriptions of the Design and Cosmological Arguments, such as inductive, probable conclusion etc.

1 Explore the key features of *a posteriori* arguments.

(8)

A *a posteriori* arguments including the design and cosmological arguments move from a ~~general~~ ^{specific} statement to a ~~specific~~ ^{general} conclusion. This means they use inductive reasoning. This is shown by Aquinas' second way which states generally that we observe that ~~things~~ ^{effects} have causes. The ~~world has been~~ ^{creation of the} cause was ~~an event~~ ^{the effect of a cause} so must have been caused. A rejection of infinite regress then gives a specific conclusion. Something must have started the chain of cause and effects, this cause was God. *A posteriori* are therefore inductive arguments that don't wholly rely on every premise being accepted. They are also cumulative meaning that each argument ~~is~~ aims to raise the probability of God existing as opposed to claiming God must exist. Furthermore, it is through experience that we are able to gain knowledge of things so empirical evidence can be used to support them.



The candidate demonstrates some knowledge and understanding about *a posteriori* arguments and uses the Cosmological Argument to demonstrate this knowledge.

However, the material offered needs to demonstrate further development of key ideas and concepts to show a depth of understanding. This would lift the essay from Level 2 into the top band and achieve higher marks.

Level 2

Total: 5 marks



Define key terms carefully and precisely

Develop each point clearly

SECTION A

Posteriori arguments
↳

Answer ALL questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

1 Explore the key features of a *posteriori* arguments.

(8)

Posteriori arguments are arguments based on knowledge that are observable and empirical ^{synthetic}, such as the natural world or the ~~some~~ functions of the universe. Due to how they are based on particular observations ^{and evidence in the world} to generate ~~an~~ a general conclusion, posteriori arguments are also ~~inductive~~, ~~are~~ inductive ~~where~~ where they argue from a particular ~~exist~~ observation of the world to ~~assume~~ ^{deduce} that God exists. As such, ~~as~~ the premises of posteriori arguments does not automatically lead to a ~~definite~~ conclusion that is absolutely correct if the premises are right, and ~~there~~ they merely increase the probability of God's existence rather than ~~prove~~ proving that God ~~logically~~ must exist. Example of a posteriori argument includes the Design argument, where from the natural complex ~~nature~~ ^{functions} of the natural world such as the eye and the solar system suggests that ~~there~~ there must be a ^{intelligent} designer of the universe, which is God. Cosmological arguments also observes that ~~the~~ ^{there} many things in nature requires a cause, thus ~~it~~ assumes that the universe also requires a cause, and the cause is God.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



This response was awarded full marks. It is not a perfect answer but it does enough to reach the full 8 marks at the top of the Level 3 band.

There is a wide range of knowledge, terminology is selected and used well and a broad range of key ideas and beliefs is addressed.

This candidate has focused the selection of their material to the time and space provided. Points made have been supported effectively by a judicious use of the Design and Cosmological arguments.

Level 3

Total: 8 marks



Make sure points are explained clearly throughout

Question 2

This question provided the most wide-ranging standards of scripts. There were some candidates whose submitted only a blank page.

Good responses were familiar with the ideas of Whitehead and Griffin and how their ideas on creation led them to modify the traditional concept of God — and thus resolving the logical incoherence within the problem of evil.

Assessment usually discussed both strengths and weaknesses involved in changing the idea of omnipotence. The most common strengths that were assessed were:

- God's continued omnibenevolence
- God suffering alongside humans
- the possible overlap with scientific theories such as evolution
- according to Process Theodicy, God does not have the power to stop evil and suffering and so is not to blame

When assessing each of these strengths, candidates often gave counter-arguments. For example, when discussing God's lack of power to stop evil and suffering, many candidates then explored whether such a God was worthy of worship; this enabled the idea to assess the success of this particular strength.

Many responses also dealt with the issue of whether it is, in fact, a Theodicy and the impact this may have on resolving the problem. Weaker candidates usually only focused on the modified role of omnipotence without much more detail — but there was evidence of knowing the topic.

~~The process theodicy~~ A theodicy is an attempt to solve the inconsistent triad - ~~how~~ how can an omnibenevolent (all-loving), omnipotent (all-powerful) God allow for evil and suffering to exist in our world. The process theodicy is the most controversial ~~the~~ and modern theodicy proposed (often associated with Whitehead and Griffin (20th)).

The process theodicy is a strong resolution to the problem of evil (PoE) as it creates a rational explanation for the existence of evil in our world by altering the definition of God. As God is proposed as being ~~a changing God who~~ a God that ~~does not~~ ~~fully~~ created the world and now has little control over it, a God who is changing and experiencing time with humanity. This definition of God creates a reasonable explanation for evil, evil is the development of humans and God being unable to intervene. Griffin describes God as "a fellow sufferer who understands". Although fulfilling in solving the PoE, it does not account for the excess of suffering in our world. Surely God could have made a world where he would not have become powerless and unable to save people from suffering. If God is still omnibenevolent, why would he ~~create~~ create a world at all if it was only going to result in pain. Therefore the process theodicy is not strong in providing a full understanding of God, and is ultimately very ambiguous.

Another strength of process theodicy is that it presents God as an empathetic being who cares about his creation and does not want us to suffer. Although a touching sentiment, it is completely undermined by the fact that ~~the~~ the Judeo/Christian definition of God is completely altered and ~~is~~ ^{is} not ~~follow~~ ~~coherent~~ coherent with scripture. Other Theodicies, such as Augustine's free-will defence, follow scriptural authority and make sense along with the Bible. But creating an empathetic, not omnipotent God seems contradictory of stories of God going into war with his people, and destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, and making deals with the devil in the story of Job. Dawkins describes the God of the Old Testament a "malevolent bully", and the process theodicy does not align with these behaviours.

Therefore, in assessing the process theodicy and its strengths, it is clear that it is not a solution to the PoE as it just changes the definition of God and undermines the God of Traditional theism as one who is not powerful and unable to aid humanity.



This response is focused, with some useful terminology but the discussion might have been developed in more depth.

It discusses a range of material, some more accurately than others, and offers a consideration of some evidence with a simple chain of reasoning.

Level 2

Total: 8 marks



Make sure all the material you select is directly relevant to the question

arise from removing God's omnipotence. In the Bible it is clearly stated (Genesis) that God created the heavens and the earth, He is regarded in Christianity as a God who through whom 'all things' are possible. This shows that to have created the universe, God HAS to be omnipotent. Because of this, instead of defending the God of Christian Theism, Whitehead creates an entirely new, impotent God, and therefore fails in his theodicy. This criticism is ~~an~~ undoubtably strong - a God who is not ^{OMNI-}impotent could hardly be seen as worthy of worship, ~~to~~.

Another strength of the Process Theodicy can be taken from its basis in the Bible - Whitehead gives his Process God characteristics, and uses ~~exact~~ ~~the~~ biblical scripture to support this. Whitehead describes ~~humans~~ a God as being morally evolving and changeable - this is a way to further present that God is NOT fully developed, and therefore does not have the power to

present evil. He references the moral development of God that we see in the Bible: in the Old Testament, God is seen to be somewhat 'immoral' - He allows plagues and genocides. But in the New Testament, He is seen as more kind and loving - "For God so loved the world" and "God is love" are clearly stated in the Bible. This shows, with biblical ~~and~~ relevance, how the process God is still morally evolving. This is a strength because it makes the argument more acceptable and appealing to Christians.

However, there are ~~lots of~~ biblical teaching that seem to reject Whitehead's claims. The Bible says that He is the same "yesterday, today and forever" - which depicts how God's nature is unchangeable. ~~Many Christians~~ - God in the Bible is depicted as self-assured and morally developed. Christians regard God as a morally perfect being, who is ~~at the~~ ^{our} standard of morality, such as ~~for~~ Descartes in his ontological argument. Because of this, God ~~can't~~ cannot be changeable and morally undeveloped. This criticism does very well in weakening the Process Theology, because it shows that the God of the Bible has been the same since the beginning, and will not change - it highlights inconsistencies.

One final strength is that it makes God more personable and relatable. Whitehead says he "joys in our joys and sorrows in our sorrows - ~~to~~ ^{this} is a likeable God - a God people would want to pray to, as He understands us and cares for us. Whitehead says humans and God are on a journey together to moral perfection. This is a strength as it correlates with the Christian 'God of love'. However this is a weak strength - Christians see God as an exalted ~~image~~ figure - we cannot be like him - In conclusion, the weaknesses are greater than the strengths - and therefore the theology fails to prove God's existence.

(Total for Question 2 = 12 marks)



This answer demonstrates a wide range of knowledge and understanding.

It uses terminology carefully and deconstructs issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning.

There is a comprehensive engagement with the intent of the question and the response reflects insight and critical awareness of the issues surrounding Process Theodicy.

Deservedly, the response receives full marks.

Level 3

Total: 12 marks



Try, where possible, to keep points concise

Question 3

Q03(a) Explore the key ideas of contingency and necessary existence in the Cosmological Argument. (10)

Q03(b) Analyse the view that the Cosmological Argument fails to prove the existence of God. (20)

Q03(a) This question, like Q01, assesses AO1.

High-scoring candidates relished the opportunity to present their knowledge and understanding of these two key ideas of the cosmological argument. Good responses showed precise knowledge of the meaning of contingency and necessary existence, which was well-defined, and linked to the argument through the issue of infinite regress. Some excellent answers discussed the idea of 'aseity'.

In weaker responses, it was evident that some candidates were not clear on the particular definitions and so tended to write generally about the Cosmological Argument and Aquinas instead. Some responses in this part were too short to do the candidates justice because they only wrote a paragraph, with little detail or explanation of the terms. Some took 'necessary' to mean 'needed'.

Some candidates spent too long writing a long introduction and working through Aquinas' Three Ways, which was not required to address the question. They obviously wanted to display their detailed subject knowledge but sometimes the material was not directly answering the question. Time is a precious commodity in this exam.

Q03(b)

This question saw a wide range of responses. There was very good use of scholarship in the best answers and many answers revealed candidates' detailed knowledge. They included analysis of the ideas of philosophers such as Aquinas, William Lane Craig, Bertrand Russell, Copleston, Ockham, Swinburne, Newton, Hume, Dawkins, Darwin, Leibniz etc.

Good responses focused on the failures in the Cosmological Argument, but not simply as a list of problems. The fallacy of composition was often included and used very well, and good answers constantly referred back to the premise in the argument being attacked and whether it could survive these challenges.

These answers gave scholarly replies to the problems in the Cosmological Argument, often using the work of Copleston and Swinburne. Usually the thread of assessment running through the answer was rounded with a conclusion drawing their views back to the question.

The strongest scripts were not merely descriptive but analytical throughout. Candidates analysed each of the reasons, gave examples, counter-arguments and made judgements.

Weaker responses only gave a list of objections from Hume, Russell, and/or Dawkins. Some of those candidates who had not made judgements throughout their essay then missed a further opportunity by only writing a short conclusion (eg “it absolutely fails”) without showing how the argument had been undermined.

A minority of candidates had answered Q03(a) with everything that they knew about cosmology and then found it difficult to identify material for Q03(b). An even smaller group of the weakest scripts showed great confusion and darted from infinite regress, to God existing in the mind and in reality, to Irenaeus. There seemed to be little understanding of which material related to which topic. A small number of candidates answered Q03(b) on a completely different topic from Q03(a) — usually giving the Ontological argument but occasionally Design.

Copleston: Take the proposition "if there is a contingent being then there is a Necessary Being." I consider that that proposition hypothetically expressed is a necessary proposition. If you are going to call every necessary proposition an analytic proposition, then – in order to avoid a dispute in terminology – I would agree to call it analytic, though I don't consider it a tautological proposition. But the proposition is a necessary proposition only on the supposition that there is a contingent being. That there is a contingent being actually existing has to be discovered by experience, and the proposition that there is a contingent being is certainly not an analytic proposition, though once you know, I should maintain, that there is a contingent being, it follows of necessity that there is a Necessary Being.

Russell: The difficulty of this argument is that I don't admit the idea of a Necessary Being and I don't admit that there is any particular meaning in calling other beings "contingent."

(Source: extract from *A Debate on the Existence of God* – A Debate between Bertrand Russell and Father Frederick C Copleston, 1948, taken from: <http://www.biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/p20.htm>, Edexcel Anthology)

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about contingent and necessary beings.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

The ideas illustrated in this passage about contingent and necessary beings is that contingent beings and necessary beings exist because of contingent beings. Copleston takes this as proposition hypothetically stating that if this was the case then it would be hard to avoid infinite regress 'I consider that the proposition hypothetically expressed is a necessary proposition... in order to avoid I would agree to call it analytic.' This shows that he thought if the case if there is a contingent being then there is a necessary being is analytic which means self evidently true. This is unders-

standable because it would ~~not~~ indicate any chance of an infinite regress because ~~an~~ ~~explicitly~~ the reason for a being would end at the necessary being.

Contingent and necessary beings ~~should~~ ~~can be~~ for example could be for example Adam and Eve there must of been a necessary being in order to avoid infinite regress which therefore must be God. The passage supports this claim as Copelston states 'the proposition that there is a contingent being is certainly not analytic... it follows of necessity that there is a necessary being.'

(b) Analyse the claim that the Cosmological Argument fails to prove the existence of God.

(20)

The claim that ^{Aquinas'} ~~the~~ cosmological argument ~~originally~~ made by scholars like ~~the~~ ^{Reverend} ~~Anthony~~ ^{Kevin} ~~Alain~~ can be seen to fail to prove the existence of God because it is a posteriori and inductive in nature which suggests that there must be further evidence provided in order to prove the existence of God.

The argument itself argues for the nature and origin of God as a necessary being within himself. It suggests that because ~~the~~ everything in the world is a contingent being there must be ~~mean~~ that there is a necessary being which explained by Aquinas is God. This doesn't necessarily prove the existence of God because there will always be the question of what came before God. This therefore means the idea of infinite regress is ongoing showing that although to end that the existence of a necessary being is needed it may not be God.

A similar argument to claim that the cosmological argument fails to prove the existence

of God is that it isn't limited to just being about the Christian God or one God showing that this argument may be too vague when trying to prove the existence of God. This claim can be seen through the Kalam argument which is the muslim argument for cosmology and the existence of a necessary being. This again reinforces the idea that the cosmological argument fails to prove the existence of God due to the fact it isn't limited to one God or personal to the Christian God.

Furthermore another argument that provides evidence ~~that the cosmological argument may still hold~~ ~~evidence that it doesn't prove the existence of God~~ is due to the Copernicus v Russell debate which is significant when arguing if God is a necessary being and everything else is contingent. Copernicus claims that ~~we can experience~~ contingent beings can be discovered by experience which is true as for example at some point everyone on earth has had two parents in order to be exist this therefore shows evidence of an experience that proves the existence of a contingent being, a baby however their necessary being who are their parents are also contingent beings because

they did not produce themselves. This could continue on forever as explained by Aquinas so he explains the necessity of a necessary being.

Although most people can agree that a necessary being is key to explaining the reason for the universe it cannot be proven to be God for just because it may seem like the simplest explanation as this necessary being cannot ever be experienced or proven then the argument is left open therefore showing again that the cosmological argument does in fact not prove the existence of God.

Overall To conclude, the claim that the cosmological argument ~~does~~ fails to prove the existence of God is in ~~the~~ fact true and heavily supported as ~~to~~ there is no evidence to explain the nature and origin of God ~~it~~ is as a necessary being and it does not show ~~that~~ clearly that the ~~God~~ God that could be claimed to be the necessary being is the Christian God or the only God therefore shows that the cosmological argument is not ~~a~~ to a ~~good~~ ~~for~~ good way to prove the existence of God.



For part (a) the candidate offers only a brief engagement with the extract.

The response is thin in relevant material. It received 5 marks in mid-Level 2 because there is some meaningful attempt to clarify' but this was limited.

For part (b) there is just enough material and AO2 skill in evidence to reach into Level 4. It is argued clearly, although it does lack some technical language and development of relevant material. It received 14 marks.

Part (a): Level 2: 5 marks

Part (b): Level 4: 14 marks

Total: 19 marks



Discuss ideas as fully as possible to access the full range of marks

Copleston: Take the proposition "if there is a contingent being then there is a Necessary Being." I consider that that proposition hypothetically expressed is a necessary proposition. If you are going to call every necessary proposition an analytic proposition, then – in order to avoid a dispute in terminology – I would agree to call it analytic, though I don't consider it a tautological proposition. But the proposition is a necessary proposition only on the supposition that there is a contingent being. That there is a contingent being actually existing has to be discovered by experience, and the proposition that there is a contingent being is certainly not an analytic proposition, though once you know, I should maintain, that there is a contingent being, it follows of necessity that there is a Necessary Being.

Russell: The difficulty of this argument is that I don't admit the idea of a Necessary Being and I don't admit that there is any particular meaning in calling other beings "contingent."

(Source: extract from *A Debate on the Existence of God* – A Debate between Bertrand Russell and Father Frederick C Copleston, 1948, taken from: <http://www.biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/p20.htm>, Edexcel Anthology)

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about contingent and necessary beings.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

In Frederick Copleston and Bertrand Russell's radio debate, Copleston – a Jesuit priest – takes on the ~~the~~ theist position and Russell – a well known atheist – takes on an agnostic position. Copleston leads this argument by laying out the argument based on Aquinas's argument from Contingency and Necessity. Copleston claims that the world is full of contingent being, and due to the logical impossibility of infinite regress, there must be a necessary being the universe was created by. In this extract Copleston is replying to the fact that Russell had just accused him of bad grammar in saying that a necessary being must be ~~in~~ existence. Copleston says "If ~~if~~ there is a contingent being, then there is a

necessary being," although he phrases this as a hypothetical proposition. This is Coppelston's stance, as he goes on to state that it is a 'necessary proposition': Hence Coppelston is saying that the existence of contingent beings, which we can empirically verify is true, necessitates a being which is completely necessary for the contingent beings to rely on. Coppelston takes Russell's critique, saying that this is an analytic proposition, and tries to explain it as not being so.

Coppelston goes on to say "That there is a contingent being actually existing has to be discovered by experience...". He is refuting the claim that this is analytic, analytic meaning that the statement is true by definition, as we must experience the fact that plants are contingent on air and water, and that humans are contingent on their parents and the natural elements of the world to exist. Here Coppelston is using a posteriori logic, which makes sense because he is mainly arguing from the cosmological argument. Coppelston goes on to restate his position that the existence of contingent beings means that "it follows of necessity that there is a necessary being". This is because Coppelston does not believe that infinite regress is logically possible because it is not a sufficient explanation as well as the fact he does not believe that the universe itself is a necessary being.

In Russell's reply, we see echoes of Kantian thought. Russell says 'I don't admit the idea of a necessary being.' First of all. It can be understood that Russell is following Kant's thought

that one can destroy the the cosmological and ontological argument through the breacing down of the concept of Necessary existence. To Russell, the idea of a Necessary being does not work because he views the existence of the earth as brute fact. Although Copleston claims that the existence of contingent beings means there must be a necessary being Russell does not base that to be true, later on claiming that we have no evidence and no logical reason to believe in the necessity of the existence of any being. Copleston's argument ultimately relies on the presupposition that the universe was caused by a being and therefore only meaningful to theists.

Russell also dissects Copleston's idea of 'contingent beings', saying "I don't admit there is any particular meaning in calling other beings 'contingent'". Seemingly Russell is saying that the idea of contingent beings relies on the presupposition that there is a belief in a necessary being. Russell takes the idea that beings are 'contingent' to be a meaningless statement, thinking it to be analytic as it says nothing new or insightful that we do not already know. To Russell we do not need to speculate on the fact that humans need air to exist, this is something we know already. This also does not mean that there is a necessary being which sustains the whole 'universe' - a word that Russell also deems to be meaningless. All of this, according to Russell is bad grammar and seems to be a lack of understanding of the possibility that the world just simply exists, not that it is a necessary thing itself either.

(b) Analyse the claim that the Cosmological Argument fails to prove the existence of God.

(20)

The cosmological argument is an a posteriori argument that uses deductive reasoning in making a claim that God exists. Amongst its forerunners are ^{*} Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle. Aquinas in his book the Summa theologiae outlined his 5 ways from which God is shown to exist but the cosmological argument focuses on his way from sufficient cause, contingency, necessity and motion. Although a popular argument, philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and David Hume have antiquated it saying that it fails to prove the existence of God.

Immanuel Kant heavily antiquated it in his book 'Critique of pure reason', with one of his main arguments being against a posteriori logic. The cosmological argument follows the logic that one can view the world through sensed experience and map that onto the metaphysical - that is a posteriori.

Immanuel Kant was notably against this as he thought that metaphysical cannot be proved through logical reasoning. Similar to Dr Rudolph Otto's idea of the numinous, Kant believed that we cannot prove the existence of God through logical reasoning as God is unknowable to us, a distant unimaginable being. Therefore it is a mistake to claim that through viewing the physical world around us we can claim to know and understand the character of God, let alone to claim that that proves his existence undoubtedly.

Although the cosmological argument does not claim to understand the character of God, only to prove that he exists. The argument from motion explains this by saying that when we view the world around us we see that everything is in motion all the time, stillness is an illusion as millions of atoms are constantly moving, and we know that for something to be in motion it must have been set in motion, this thing must be existent outside of time and space for it to be able to move everything in motion, this being must therefore be God. This seems to be a logical conclusion because for the being to be able to move set everything in the universe in motion the being should logically not be affected by time and space, and according to the classical theistic view of God, a being who exists outside time and space must be God.

Despite its seemingly logical conclusion, the idea that we can view the functions of the earth and map that onto the existence of the earth is seemingly an inductive leap. According to David Hume, the cosmological argument makes a massive jump from seeing functions of the world and therefore saying that God must exist from there on. Take the argument from sufficient reason, this is one of Aquinas's ways, which says that infinite regress is impossible because it is not a sufficient enough explanation for the existence of the universe. But we may ask why is this? Following the logic of a posteriori reasoning, it would make sense that everything in the universe is contingent on something, this may well be another set of factors in the universe such as the laws of thermodynamics.

for example which keep the universe together in space. The explanation for the universe may very well be that and those factors may rely on another set of factors which may not be God either. Hume is saying that we cannot go from knowing the earth's functions and therefore making a leap into assuming that God exists, it is illogical.

An a posteriori claim can be seen as perfectly logical though. The idea that we can understand things through our understanding of the world around us is a common and scientific view. Philosophers such as A. J. Ayer believe that nothing is meaningful unless empirically verifiable. And although it is not the exact same methodology as a posteriori reasoning takes the world around us and makes a logical deduction that the world must have been created because of all the rules and laws that exist naturally and show an intelligent designer. (which is why Thomas Aquinas takes the view that there must be sufficient cause of the universe that fully explains its complexities and leaves no room for doubt or constant confusion and the most logical answer according to him is an all powerful being (standing outside of time and space and is not bound by contingency and is itself a necessary sufficient being).

The trouble with this logic comes in the form of the 'brute fact' argument, which Bertrand Russell argues for. Russell claims that there is no need for an explanation for the universe and that the

feel the existence of it is just a brute fact. It is clear that the universe contains complex functions and if we look at the way things come to existence in the world or rely on other bits functions for continued existence in the world we can see that within 'the world' things are created and sustained by other 'contingent beings'. Russell says that this does not affect the concept of the world's existence. ~~The~~ The world itself is not a necessary being or even self-sufficient but we know that it exists and we will do no good in attempting to explain its existence or ~~from~~ causation, because there is in fact no cause. It can be understood that this is a distinctly atheist position which does not have the idea of a being who is necessary sensibly and sees it as a logical impossibility.

In conclusion, the cosmological argument is one of the stronger arguments, but yet fails to prove the existence of God in my opinion. The arguments from Immanuel Kant which outline the problem that a posteriori arguments have are a strong one, as it seems like a strong logical impossibility that we may understand and even prove the existence of God through empirical observations of the world around us. Kant and Hume both agree that the cosmological argument commits the fallacy of composition in which it views individual objects empirically and takes this to mean that the totality of these objects means function in the same way or even are explained through it. The inductive leaps Aquinas takes in his way are far fetched and unconvincing at times. And the same is true for the Kalām argument which argues

that everything has a cause so the whole of everything –
the universe ~~has~~ must have a cause as well. I believe this
to be a huge jump in logic to assume that this cause must
be a classical theist God. Therefore I believe that the
cosmological argument fails to prove the existence of God.



This response is awarded the full 30 marks and achieves at the top of Level 3 for part (a) and the top of Level 5 for part (b).

In part (a), the candidate outlines the ideas in the text and explains the context using a wide range of knowledge and understanding.

The response is fully-developed because the ideas are linked to references from the extract and specialist language is used well throughout.

The candidate displays a rigorous understanding of the key concepts and implications in this passage and has 'clarified' the identified ideas exceptionally well.

In part (b), the response is structured clearly and covers a wide range of knowledge.

It uses specialist, technical vocabulary throughout.

The candidate makes connections between a range of ideas and deconstructs issues.

The candidate also manages to present coherent and reasoned judgements with a full appraisal of the evidence.

(a): Level 3: 10 marks

(b): Level 5: 20 marks

Total: 30 marks



Explain the technical terms clearly, where relevant, to demonstrate your understanding

Question 4

There were some very impressive responses to this question. Candidates were well-prepared and generally showed a good understanding of the issues.

The debate and the various explanations were generally explored competently with some good argumentation and an appropriate use of technical terms. The use of clear signposting was welcomed to show what other components candidates were using to make their synoptic links. This was done without being awkward or halting the flow of argument by a pleasing number of candidates.

Many candidates were unable to earn further marks and enter Level 5 because they made no synoptic link even though they had written an otherwise excellent answer. Some of the weaker responses attempted links but the quality of the essays was poor, due to being vague or simply descriptive, rather than evaluative and addressing the question.

In terms of general content, some candidates tried to include every area in the topic and so had many short paragraphs explaining a number of approaches to religious language. This became rather list-like and AO1-heavy, without really referring to the question itself. Other candidates did better to focus on a few areas but gave strengths and weaknesses and referred to the question more.

Many candidates deployed and discussed key terms such as cognitive/non-cognitive and realist/anti-realist and were able to show an understanding of the complexity of the issue. There were some excellent answers that evaluated religious language critically, often journeying through verification, falsification, analogy, symbol and language games in order to come to an overall opinion. Popular scholars referred to included: Wittgenstein, Ayer, Hick, Flew, Wisdom, Popper, Hare, Mitchell, Tillich, Phillips and Aquinas.

Weaker answers were limited in the range of knowledge and the ability to evaluate. There were some simplistic answers eg candidates writing a thin description about anthropomorphism.

In terms of links, some candidates made excellent synoptic links to other component papers of Religious Studies. Many made insightful connections to the ways of interpreting the New Testament, and other candidates made impressive links to ethical language; there were also very academic discussions of difficulties in language within Islam and Judaism.

There were some responses that lacked any synoptic link and this limited the marks available; for some candidates this was simply because they had insufficient time. Other candidates had either forgotten, or did not understand, this part of the task.

4 Evaluate the claim that religious language is meaningless.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Religion and Ethics
- New Testament Studies
- Study of a Religion.

(30)

The claim that religious language is meaningless.

is - isn't

* AJ Ayer verification principle - empirically / analytical true.
- can't be verified.

* Hicks eschatological verification - parable of celestial city.
* Have 'blinks' parable of paranoid student.

* language games.

Wittgenstein - coherence theory

The ^{claim} that religious language is meaningless can be true, in the sense that ~~at~~ a lot of the time, it can't be verified, however I disagree with the claim that religious language is meaningless.

AJ Ayer came up with the verification principle, where for a claim to be meaningful it had to be an analytical truth or empirically verifiable, like the claim 'a triangle has three sides' is empirically verified and an analytical truth.

because it can be visibly proven through the senses and tested by mathematical reason, a claim like 'God exists' however, is meaningless because it doesn't can't be tested through the senses because God can't be observed, felt, heard or tasted equally. God isn't an analytical truth. God cannot be verified, therefore ~~God cannot be~~ therefore the ~~statement~~ 'God exists' religious state statement 'God exists' is meaningless. However, Hick came up with the eschatological verification, where he recognises that religion deals with a level of understanding / experience beyond human life and therefore anything can be verified after death. He came up with the parable of the celestial city, where two people, person A and person B are on a path. A believes that at the end of the path there is a celestial city, however B believes ^{here} ^{is no end of the} ~~path~~ ^{path} ~~is~~ ^{and it} continues infinitely. Along the path they encounter hardships, representing evil. At the end of the path either A is correct and the celestial city exists ^{making} ^{things} or B is correct and ^{never} ~~there~~ ^{is} ~~any~~ ^{claim} ~~is~~ ^{verifiable}. Hick uses this analogy to symbolise religion - the celestial city represents ^{heaven} and A symbolises a religious believer. ^{God} religious language can only become meaningful

after death, because God can only be verified after death according to Hick. I agree with Hick's claim that religious language can be meaningful after death because the verification principle is weak in deciding what can be verified in life. Historical events aren't analytic ~~pro~~ truths and can't be witnessed so therefore can't be verified, despite obviously existing and taking place. Religious ~~statements~~ ^{language} can be verified after death using the eschatological verification.

Equally, Hare came up with 'Blicks' that allow religious language to be meaningful. He uses the parable of the paranoid student to describe how religious language can be meaningful. A paranoid student genuinely believes that one of his university lecturers is trying to kill him, and despite everyone assuring him that no one is trying to kill him, he doesn't believe them. The fear that the paranoid student has is very real and meaningful to him despite it not being real. ~~It is~~ ^{Have} argues that religious language is subjectively meaningful, just like the fear of being killed is meaningful to the paranoid student. Similarly, Wittgenstein came up with language games that demonstrates a similar meaning. He argues that language is a game and is only meaningful if you understand the rules of the game. He

uses the analogy of chess, the King is a piece in chess that is only meaningful if you know how to play chess, if not the King is meaningless. This is similar to religious language. The idea of God is meaningless to an atheist like Richard Dawkins because he doesn't reason with the ^{context} ~~context~~ in which the word God is used in. Equally, a biologist like Coppleston would find the word God very meaningful because of the context it is used in with religious language he understands and reasons with. You can't play a game of chess if ~~you~~ ^{you} only understand the rules to checkers, this is a similar principle with religious language and it is only meaningful to ~~per~~ religious people.

Also, because religious language can't be verified, Flew came up with falsification and the parable of the invisible gardener. Two people (A+B) are in a garden. A notices that weeds are being trimmed and flowers are being planted, B doesn't ~~notice~~ think there is an invisible gardener but A does. He cannot see the gardener but it is aware that something is happening. This is an analogy for God. God is the invisible gardener and religious language is falsifiable, therefore meaningful.

~~God is~~

In conclusion, to claim that religious language is meaningless is incorrect because it can be meaningful subjectively like how suggester with his 'blks', Equality, Hicks eschatological verification does make religious language meaningful.



This is a sound and competent engagement with the question although rather brief. Although this response contains accurate information it becomes rather pedestrian.

There is some evaluation but it is more a descriptive narrative than an integrated evaluative essay.

More importantly, the answer does not make an explicit synoptic link thus preventing the essay from reaching Level 5.

Level 4

Total: 24 marks



Maintain your focus on the question and apply your knowledge throughout with clear evaluative comment

4 Evaluate the claim that religious language is meaningless.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Religion and Ethics
- ~~New Testament Studies~~ → Barth @ post mod
- Study of a Religion.

(30)

PLAN: RL = meaningless	meaningful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Hick: eschat, Celest ↳ can't be verified itself • FP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ ★ VS VP, universal, 0°C ↳ Popper, only science ↳ Hare: bluk, Oxford ↳ Chris don't think ^{like that} ↳ Mitchell: Partisan sigart ↳ prob evil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lang games ↳ Pic theory, Witt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ abstract concepts ^{denoc} ↳ lang games, Phil ↳ Barth: objective ↳ God → just hasn't revealed to him ↳ RL meaningful but objectively

This essay will argue against this view, claiming that religious language (RL) is meaningful for believers.

Ayer's Verification Principle (VP), influenced by logical positivism, claims that RL is meaningless as it is unverifiable. This is because Ayer claims that any statements which are not

empirically verifiable, either in practice or in principle, strongly or weakly, is meaningless. Ayer applies the same VP to moral language (emotivism, non-cognitivist, anti-realist), arguing that they are just "emotional ejaculations" with no relation to reality. This argument is convincing because Christians claim that God is transcendent, meaning that he does not relate to our world, so we have no way to know him empirically. However, theologians like Barth and Augustine would argue that, though God is transcendent and "wholly other", he became human through Jesus, thus having a relationship with us. Further, they argue we can read God's revealed word in Scripture. Nevertheless, perhaps Ayer's point is strong because it allows for. Furthermore, Hick disagrees that RL is unverifiable. This is because it is eschatologically verifiable in principle after we die. He uses the Parable of the Celestial City to illustrate this - just as we will know if there is a city at the end of the road once we reach the end, we will know if God exists once we die because we will either go to Heaven/Hell or there will be nothing after death. This is convincing because

it shows that RL can be verified in principle after death, meaning according to the VP it is actually meaningful. Moreover, even if Hick is wrong and the VP cannot verify RL, the foundations of the VP are not conclusively strong. This is because the VP is self-contradictory as it cannot be verified, suggesting it is meaningless as it fails its own test.

However, Ayer argues that the VP does not need verification as it is a theory of language, just as we do not need to verify grammar.

Nevertheless, it seems ~~too~~ much of a leap of faith to accept the VP — if we accept the VP without verification, why can we not accept RL as meaningful without verification? Therefore the VP fails to prove that RL is meaningless. (CFP)

However, Flew's Falsification Principle, first proposed in ~~the~~ relation to science by Popper, also claims that RL is meaningless. The FP argues that any ~~thing~~^{claim} which could not be reasonably falsified is meaningless. Flew uses the Parable of the Gardener to show that RL dies the "death of a ~~ten~~ thousand qualifications" because believers do not let anything count against and possibly

falsify their beliefs. God is "^{invisible,} intangible, eternally elusive" so nothing can ever prove or disprove his existence. Flew says this is the same as arguing for an "imaginary gardener" (God) or "no gardener [God] at all". This argument is more convincing than the VP because it has fewer problems, allowing universal statements like "water freezes at 0°C" to be meaningful, while the VP renders them meaningless. For this reason, the FP is more applicable to different situations and is more scientific.

However, ~~treating all language like~~ science is ~~unconvincing~~ because Popper would criticise ~~this~~ Flew's application of the FP to ~~all~~ RC. Hare argues that RC is different to scientific language as it is a set of non-cognitive, unverifiable "blikes" which are still deeply meaningful to those who hold them as they ~~are~~ govern the person's behaviour. He uses the parable of the Lunatic at Oxford to illustrate this - no matter how many friendly dons the lunatic meets, he keeps his blik that all dons want to murder him and does not let anything falsify his belief. Although this belief is unfalsifiable, Hare claims it is deeply meaningful.

because it changes how he thinks/acts. He argues we all have blicks (sane and insane), and that for this reason RL ~~cannot~~ is meaningful but unverifiable, changing how believers act. However, this critique is unconvincing because, as Flew points out, most believers do not see ~~their~~ God as a non-cognitive subjective blick, but rather as an objective truth. This is a convincing response because critical rationalists like Aquinas and Paley, for example, believe we can objectively prove God's existence by observing the natural world, e.g. in the design and cosmological arguments. Therefore it is more accurate ~~to~~ to describe RL as assertions since this is what most believers mean when they say things like 'God exists'. Therefore, if they are assertions, religious claims are ~~unverifiable~~ falsifiable so meaningless according to Flew's FP.

Nevertheless, Flew's application of the FP to all language could be seen as unconvincing. Popper, the creator of the FP, only intended for it to be applied to scientific theories, not all claims. The FP ~~is~~ has weakened explanatory power if

applied to all language as it renders moral ~~and~~ claims and things like art and some poetry meaningless. Because the FP fails its own test and cannot be verified, it is unconvincing to apply it to all language. This is a convincing criticism because Flew later abandoned his application of the FP to all language, and even became a Christian in his 80s, suggesting it is not a strong approach to all language. This means it ~~is a~~ ^{has} weak foundation to critique RL with, suggesting ~~RL~~ RL is still meaningful.

However, Wittgenstein's picture theory of language (PT) claims that RL is meaningless because it does not relate to reality. Wittgenstein argued that anything which we cannot have a picture in our mind of does not relate to the world so is meaningless. For example, since God is invisible and transcendent, we cannot picture him, meaning RL is meaningless. A strength of this theory is that it rules out obviously-meaningless statements like 'square circle' as they cannot be pictured. However, it is overall unconvincing as it renders abstract ideas which are obviously meaningful meaningless, e.g.

democracy. For this reason, Wittgenstein later rejected this theory in favour of his theory of language games (LGs). DZ Phillips developed this and argued that ~~anything~~ in different 'LGs' language is meaningful within its own 'LG' but not outside it, due to shared experience and forms of life within the context of the 'LG'. For example, while claims like 'God loves us' are meaningless to atheists like Ayer, they hold powerful meaning for believers. This is convincing as it has greater explanatory power, explaining why ~~some~~ RL appears meaningless to some but meaningful to others. However, from a theological perspective, theologians like Barth would criticise ~~this~~ the LGs because it relies on postmodern ideas of truth which value a subjective human-made truth ~~off~~ over the higher objective truth of God. This is convincing as theologians and Catholics like Augustine claim that humans are inherently flawed due to the Fall and Original Sin (Genesis^(OS)). This means we cannot be trusted to have our own concepts of subjective truth, but instead

must rely on ~~the~~ God's truth which he reveals to us, e.g. through scripture. However, non-cognitivists like Wittgenstein would contest this and argue that it is begging the question as this response relies on a belief $\&$ in objective truth and the existence of God. ~~Therefore, it does~~ Further, it is based on belief in OS and the Fall, which liberal theologians like ~~the~~ McGrath argue are myths. ~~This is convincing as, ^{as} and evidence for evolution suggests.~~ Therefore Wittgenstein's point still stands and we can consider RL as a LG, meaning it is meaningful in the context of the LG.

Overall, arguments against the meaningfulness of ~~the~~ ^{RL}, like the VP, FP and PT, are flawed as they are often self-contradictory and cannot be applied to all language. Wittgenstein's / D. Z. Philip's LGs are more convincing as they explain why different groups disagree on the meaningfulness of RL, thus meaning RL is meaningful for ~~the~~ believers in the specific context of believers.

(Total for Question 4 = 30 marks)



This is an example of a very good response that is awarded full marks.

There is a good range and variety of material here.

There is a clear structure and a good link made with ethical language (emotivism etc).

The candidate marshalls their material well, making good AO2 judgements throughout.

Level 5

Total: 30 marks



A clear structure to the longer essays is very useful

It helps to signpost your link section to the examiner, so that it is clear to which other component that you have studied you are linking this topic

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates should:

- Ensure they choose relevant material specifically to address the question as set. For example, in Q01 (8-mark) essay, candidates need to focus the structure of their response to the marks and space available
- Remember to identify the use of the command words (assess, analyse and evaluate), by offering an assessment of, or verdict on, a stance and not to merely present an alternative view, eg, 'some scholars disagree', without demonstrating relevant reasoning why 'some scholars disagree'
- Read the question thoroughly and reference it throughout to sustain the focus within their answer
- Ensure scholars are used accurately in respect of the ideas ascribed to them
- For Q04, make the synoptic link explicitly clear. Sound synoptic links are usually more than a sentence or two in content and draw attention to the issues being linked

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

