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Examiners' Report

June 2010

GCE AS Level Religious Studies
6RS02 1B

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June 2010

Publications Code US024630

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Introduction

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Investigations Paper of June 2010 demonstrated an encouraging level of engagement with a wide range of topics by candidates who demonstrated a superb level of scholarship across all areas of study. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. Some Centres chose to focus on the same or similar topics for all their candidates, whereas other Centres permitted considerable choice for individual candidates. Candidates were very well prepared for the examination and it was evident that Centres used their specialist resources and interests to encourage candidates to research in depth a particular area of study. It is important to note that the overall title of this unit 'Investigations' has a definite academic purpose. The aim is to involve students as active participants pursuing open-ended enquiries with an emphasis on independent learning. Questions were designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and all valid answers were considered.

Most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option but there were still a few entries for particular areas of study where it might have benefitted the candidate more to consider entry for a different area of study. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper. Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer. Examiners were encouraged to mark positively. Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the option that matches their area of study.

Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation. Importantly, in the exam itself there must be explicit attention to these objectives in the examination answer. Each question consistently referred to the assessment objectives with the trigger word 'Examine' for AO1 and 'Comment on' for AO2. These dictated the structure of the question and helped candidates to plan their answers. It would be advisable for candidates to pay regular attention to the level descriptors for these assessment objectives as a way of monitoring their development and progress during their investigations. The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have investigated' will always appear in the question to ensure that the generic question can be answered with material from any appropriate investigation. The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions. In preparation for this examination candidates may find it useful to write up their investigation under exam timed conditions to a variety of different possible questions. They might build up a number of different essay plans to different possible questions. The important point in these activities is to enable candidates to develop their management of material such as how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. However, success can be undermined by writing up a rote-learned answer which was not adapted to the question set.

This report features work produced by candidates in the actual examination for Area 1A, 1B and 1C where possible. Areas 1D, 1E, 1F and 1G have smaller entries and the style of report is briefer for these areas of study. Full Results Plus reports will be available in future examination sessions if the entry is larger.

Question 1

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE; MEDITATION

There was a broad range of responses: the best responses had a good range of scholarship which integrated their material into a coherent response rather than just re-telling a range of views/theories/life/work within the chosen investigation. Overall the majority of candidates were well prepared for this question but some candidates seem to have anticipated a different question and had difficulty with manipulating their material. Whilst they still produced essays of merit, their AO2 marks were weaker than their AO1 scores. This approach adopted by some candidates produced many competent essays but fewer of the more outstanding and independent essays.

The phrase 'with reference to the topic you investigated' led to responses ranging from general statements with little or no reference to a particular topic, to some very precise analyses of particular ideas and scholars. Some candidates covered a lot of topics, often in a rather shallow way, providing a general narrative account of views of religious experience. Swinburne and James were probably the most popular scholars mentioned, but there were also good discussions of a range of different thinkers. Of the weaker scripts it was common to see accounts of miracles and a discussion of Hume interpreted by the candidate as an account and discussion of a religious experience. Some candidates gave a good outline of the argument for the existence of God based on religious experience and considered its strengths and weaknesses; such essays gained some credit, but these candidates struggled to relate their responses closely to the question set. Candidates must be reminded that the demands of this paper are different to the demands of 6RS03. Only a few candidates grappled with the idea of 'fuller understanding' from the question. The best answers considered what religious experience could reveal about God and/or humanity i.e. if there is a God, or whether experiences can be explained via psychology. These answers also assessed the persuasiveness of this material how far it revealed a fuller understanding of ourselves and/or God.

This essay packs a wide range of material into a full answer which engages fully with the question throughout. A good example of this is at the bottom of the fourth page.

The Oxford religious experience research centre conducted a survey with results that showed that 1/3 of people asked had had a religious experience and had considered it to be the most important experience of their life. The fact that it effected such a large proportion of people may suggest many things about human nature and possibly reveal something about God. RICHARDS said 'A God who is actually experienced is no longer an abstract concept, he becomes something concrete that can be seen heard and felt.' This would therefore reveal more to the believer about God and in order for them to develop a fuller understanding of him.

A religious experience is ^{non-empirical personal} ~~an~~ encounter with the divine. NIVIAN SMART defined it as involving 'some sort of perception of the invisible world.' ST THERESA of AVILCA said 'God established himself in the interior of my soul in such a way that when I returned to myself I had no doubt that I had been in God and God in me.' This view is objective implying God or ultimate experience be



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Examiner Comments

In the introduction the candidate includes a quote that is very quickly linked to the question.

the object of experience. Atheists however would give a subjective ^{definition} ~~view~~ of religious experience for them it would be any experience given a religious interpretation, as it depends upon the individual and their ~~writers~~ view on the matter. DAWKINS claims that ^{testimonies of} religious experience ^{are} simply the manifestations of mental and psychological needs he said 'If you have found yourself to have had such an experience, you may find yourself firmly believing it to be a real one, but don't expect the rest of us to take your word for it.'

An important area of religious experience is conversion. This in the word conversion means to turn around or change direction and it varies in the way in which it comes about.

There is the instant type as experienced by Saul on the road to Damascus. He saw a flash of light and heard God's voice saying 'Saul why do you persecute me.' This had a profound impact on Paul who was then converted to Christianity later becoming known as St. Paul which is significant when considering he was a previous zealous persecutor of Christianity. However, there are different versions of this in the book of Acts. Others with Paul claim to have only seen the light and not to ~~of~~ have heard God's voice and vice versa.

This could indicate the selective nature of religious experience ~~and how~~ as God chooses who has the experience, or different people have different levels of perception. Then there is the type gradual type as experienced by C.S. Lewis, he famously claimed to have come to Christianity 'kicking and screaming.' His experience lasted over two years during which he changed from atheism, Pantheism, Theism and finally arrived at Christianity. This shows how it is not always instantaneous but can come about through an intellectual process and develop and evolve over time. On the 21st December 1929 upon reading 'John Bunyan's Grace abounding' Lewis wrote 'I admitted that God was God and knelt and prayed.' Lewis' autobiography speaks primitively of his conversion to Theism (1929) rather than to Christianity (1931). This critical change came later on evening when walking and talking till 4am with J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson about myth and Christianity. Lewis wrote 'when we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, upon reaching the 200 I did.' This shows how this area of religious experience is particularly revealing in that it shows the profound impact that can be had on individuals who can completely change their religious perspective once undergoing such an experience. *

(last page)

Some types of Religious Experience are described as 'seeing as' meaning they depend upon the individual and their interpretation of the event. The example of seeing as can best be described through the example of Tolstoy and Mill. They both went through a period of extended depression followed by a revolutionary experience that restored their faith and happiness. For Tolstoy the event had a particular religious significance that led him to the conclusion that 'to know God and to live are one and the same thing.' For Mill however there was no religious significance he merely had his faith restored in Mankind. As H maintained in 'Easter in Ordinary' that anyone could have a religious experience with a religious viewpoint in everyday experiences. It is a way of seeing the world in action and discourse patterned by the creed. This works in accordance with an anti-realist understanding of God as it coheres with the believers understanding of the world, but does not correspond to an objective reality.

Many sceptics however question the veridical nature of such experiences. Many monks and nuns for example stare themselves in order to induce an experience. This was famously criticised by Bertrand Russell who claimed

'We can make no distinction between a man who eats little and sees heaven and a man who drinks much and sees snakes.' Here RUSSEK is making an important criticism as he stresses how such experiences are in effect false/unreliable testimonies for what he considers to be a hallucination. JAMES HUNTER believes just because mystical experiences can be drug or alcohol induced, does not mean they should be dismissed for 'the drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness.' Therefore such experiences are still valid to develop an understanding of God and ourselves.

Many people who have their 'lives saved' often claim to have seen a 'light at the end of the tunnel'. However many have this same effect when under the influence of illicit drugs. There is an alarmingly close chemical structure between illicit drugs and the drugs used to treat patients in a critical condition in hospital. PANKHÉ made the correlation between illicit drug taking and the features of mystic experiences and how both result in a feeling of an 'overwhelming sense of joy and sacredness.' Psychologists such as FREUD try to offer an alternative explanation for the mystic. Such experiences, he claims that they occur

as a result of 'wish fulfilment' caused by a persons child like dependency on God. This may perhaps suggest that the mentally unstable are ~~more~~ ^{often} prone to having ~~these~~ ^{such} experiences. This may explain why the language of mystic is similar to the mentally ill: 'I was merging into one and am not the same anymore.'

A key issue that has arisen from private experience is that others who have not had the experience are unable to know if the person having the experience is telling the truth or not. ^{*}This is why JAMES put forward the principle of Sufficient ^{Credibility/} reason arguing that unless you have a good reason not to believe the person having the experience, such as them being a pathological liar, you should believe them. Furthermore JAMES believed if positive fruits are born of the experience, it should be considered to be a real and genuine one.

* Also it depends upon the individuals perception of the matter as one mans religious experience is another mans hallucination.

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Examiner Tip

Hard work pays off! Examining and commenting on a good range of appropriate scholarship often results in a well-written, balanced study that achieves high levels in both assessment objectives.

Therefore what does religious experience reveal about God? SWINBURNE believed an omnipotent and perfectly good creator would seek to interact with his creatures and in particular with human persons capable of knowing him. However all the faith traditions rest of testimonies of religious experience and they all differ significantly. Roman Catholics tend to experience the Virgin Mary and Hindus the God Vishnu for example. HUMPHREYS in his conflicting claims argument against religious experience said since all the experiences in the faith traditions are different surely they could not all be right resulting in a 'triumph for the sceptic.' The Tibetan book of the dead could be quoted to explain such differences saying 'The divine being will manifest himself in the most appropriate way for the individual.' In terms of what religious experience may reveal about human nature ^{this} can best be described through the case of AQUINAS. Towards the end of his life on day at mass he had an overwhelming experience that convinced him that all the intellectual arguments he had ever written about God were 'but straw.' When he tried to speak of what he had encountered he fell silent. Indicating the sheer power and impact of the experience on the individual who is left left in effect baffled.

Ultimately testimonies of religious experience would lead the individual to developing a more concrete ~~ex~~ understanding of God's actual existence. However its conclusion is only probable owing its position as an a posteriori, synthetic and inductive argument. SWINBURNE believed as part of a cumulative case that the evidence of religious experience made God's existence more probable than not and ought to tip the balance in favour of God's existence. For the Sceptic however there will always be another explanation for religious experience other than God and so they would dismiss the claim that a fuller understanding of God and ourselves could be revealed.

* ST THERES of LISIEX experienced the type of conversion that simply deepened her faith. On Christmas Eve just a few days before her fourteenth birthday she had an experience that she ever after referred to as 'my conversion'. She described how on that blessed night the sweet infant Jesus scarcely an hour old filled the darkness of my soul with floods of light and put his weapons in my hand so that I went from strength to strength! Again this shows the profound impact of religious experience on an individual, an impact that was so profound that the following year she went and

told her father of her wish to become a Carmelite. This was as a result of the intense love and devotion that she experienced.

Question 2

MIND AND BODY

This question saw a good use of scholarship from most candidates although the weakest answers simply outlined Plato and/or Descartes with no real analysis. Many wrote about whether the relationship between mind and body can be understood (a question from a previous year) although most answers took on board the question set and worked really well in terms of tailoring their research to answering it. The question invited some very thorough responses offering a technically adept, detailed, and scholarly, analysis of dualism and monism with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each position, often using good scientific material as well. There were many competent candidates who did less well on the evaluation; these candidates tended to provide a very solid account of the various positions in the mind body debate but were less sure-footed when critically examining the claim that mind and body are the same. It was good to see the range of scholars included in the essays - Plato and Descartes were common, but there were many very learned discussions of Gilbert Ryle and other scholars. A significant number of candidates wrote about behaviourism and many drew on very recent research.

Another popular approach for this question focussed on Life after Death as a way of analysing the difficulties or implications of accounting for the relationship between mind and body as suggested by the question. The best answers systematically examined forms of monism and dualism and tackled the implications of mind/body interaction for understanding the possibilities for an existence of life after bodily death. The weakest candidates included learned material which did not answer the question set. Poor responses gave a general account of a religious view on life after death e.g. outlining Buddhist views on Life After Death in a general and simplistic format without addressing the question appropriately.

This essay is an example of where a candidate might have had difficulty manipulating their material more fully to address the question.

Philosophy of mind and the Mind/Body problem is one that has caused great debate amongst Philosophers for millennia. There are two main branches concerned with this theory which are dualism and monism. Each being the ~~is~~ polar opposite of one another.

Dualism as set out ~~as a way of showing~~ as a way of showing that the mind and body are two separate entities with distinct features however, both having constant and casual interaction with one another is most famously connected with the French philosopher René Descartes who is known for saying 'I think, therefore I am' or in Latin 'Cogito ergo sum'. Holds very much a dualistic approach and claims that the mind and body although do interact with one another on a regular basis ~~are~~ are in fact very distinct entities.

Descartes set out many different forms of dualism to help explain how the mind

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Examiner Comments

This style of introduction and first paragraph shows how the general concepts are understood but does not suggest that these ideas are understood in depth; for example a quick mention of a dualist or monist scholar in the second paragraph would firmly establish how well the field is known by the candidate.

and body are separate. Firstly, looking at Substance dualism it is clear to see that Descartes believed that our material body can be affected by an immaterial mind. Each having very obvious features the body is spatial and public whereas the mind is non-spatial and private. Descartes went on to explain about conscious experience and called this Qualia, meaning the experience or sensation of the ~~color~~ colour red as noted by our mind can in fact cause physical activities in our body by possibly experiencing pain. From this Descartes deduced epiphenomenalism where ~~consciousness~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~caused~~ ~~by~~ ~~physical~~ ~~activity~~ in the brain can have a physical effect however not vice versa, making free will an illusion and Interactionism, whereby brain states can effect the physical body and the other way round making free will not an illusion. This brought Descartes on to examining doubt and 'generalising doubt' where he used the ~~theory~~ analogy of apples in a barrel to help explain how to doubt one aspect of something means you doubt everything about it e.g. The

or how they come to affect one another. Like wise Descartes is unclear with himself and his own ideas on the mind and body as separate properties as he constantly changes and modifies his ideas particularly when contemplating where the mind is situated, he changes from the mind to be found in the brain to it being a property filling the whole body and then again to it being found within the pineal gland.

The second strand of the Philosophy of mind and the mind-body problem is monism. This theory holds that the mind and body are one distinct entity which cannot be deduced into two separate features. Philosophers that are most connected with this approach are Thomas Hobbes, Nietzsche, John Locke and Gilbert Ryle.

Firstly looking at Materialism, which ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~contributed~~ contributed to by Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Thomas Hobbes believes that what affects our physical body also affects our mind, which is just an emergent property on the physical brain.

Nichelieze stated 'I am mind and body entirely and the soul is only a name for something in the body'. Here he is attacking people who hold a dualistic approach, claiming that the mind and body are one with nothing aside from that.

An example of ~~the~~ people suffering from severe depression and ways of how it can be treated supports the materialists approach. For example people suffering from depression which is a mental illness can receive ECT treatments which, consists of giving the brain electric shocks ^{to} help stimulate and aid recovery from the depression. Materialists hold that this type of treatment works because the mind and body are one.

~~There are however problems with the materialist approach. It is impossible to explain and explain thought and to be able to give a full account of the body and ^{brain} ~~mind~~ ~~about~~ ~~regarding~~ ~~the~~ ~~mind~~ ~~and~~ ~~its~~ ~~non~~ ~~physical~~ ~~faculties~~ ~~is~~ ~~impossible~~. Materialism is also an out dated approach which is no longer ~~the~~ ~~next~~ ~~branch~~ ~~of~~ ~~materialism~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~most~~ ~~generally~~ ~~used~~ ~~to~~ ~~cure~~ ~~problems~~ ~~such~~ ~~as~~ ~~phobias~~.~~

The next sub-branch of monism is

behavioralism. This theory believes that ~~unlike~~ the physical activity is all that there is and that there is no other alternative or over-riding activity happening within the brain. For example if a person feels pain within their leg, they shout out and hold the place where it is painful. For behaviorists this is what being in pain is about. There is no other behavior taking place aside or over it in the brain, it is purely physical. Behaviorists claim that the mind and body are the same as they believe physical attributes is all that exists.

The problems with this approach of course is that they don't explain thought and in addition, to be able to explain fully the body and mind without making any references to thought experience is practically impossible.

Idealism is another aspect of the noisic approach. They ~~have~~ however, hold a completely opposite approach to materialists and behaviorists, whereby they believe that only what we experience is true and so doubt everything else as if they haven't experienced it already. They hold that

the mind is only what truly exists and that it is even possible to doubt we have a body. Critics of this however claim that it is impossible to doubt having a body.

The mind-body problem has caused great debate over hundreds of years and will continue to do so. Whilst dualists, now an out dated approach but historically the favoured one believes that the mind and body are different with separate features however, having constant and casual interaction. On the other hand, we have the more favoured view of monism which does believe that the mind and body are the same and that they are one ~~feature~~ property which can not be deduced or separated in any way.

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Examiner Tip

Knowing a range of scholars who have the point of view you are outlining enriches your response.

Question 3

A STUDY OF ONE/MORE PHILOSOPHERS OF RELIGION

This was a popular question and drew some of the best (and worst) responses. This question saw the most variety of answers; the range of scholars was huge, with existentialism having become a popular option. There were really good accounts of the works of a range of scholars with Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Russell, Nietzsche, Bonhoeffer, Hume, Kant, Swinburne, William James and Rudolph Otto and Dawkins probably the most popular. A few candidates tried to cover two different scholars, sometimes with only tenuous links, there were, for example, a number who discussed both Kierkegaard and Dawkins. In these essays the two scholars were handled separately, which meant that the quality of the content was a little lacking in detail and scholarship. As with the other two questions, AO2 marks were relatively weaker with many candidates failing to address the issue of the scholar's influence on subsequent philosophical thought. Lots of answers did not directly refer to the part of the question 'how far this may have influenced philosophical thought' and ended up with a survey of one person's writings without any comment. Some answers assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the views put forward which was closer to the task and some very good candidates did consider how far this had affected subsequent philosophers or whether it challenged people to alter/reconsider their faith or view of faith.

A few problems persisted for example with some candidates answering a different question (possibly an old coursework question) and failing to apply this material to the task directly. It must be noted that while credit was given where possible, achievement is limited if candidates are not explicitly answering the task set by the question. It appeared many centres had 'taught' topics and it was difficult to assess the level of independent research when candidates from the same centre use the same quotes and essay structures; this approach did not always allow the candidates to fully address the question set, although some did manage to amend and apply their material. The best answers in this question also included the view of scholars on their chosen philosopher to show wider reading and research/evaluation rather than simply summarising what their philosopher wrote. It was quite easy to write a précis of the work of the chosen philosopher and not focus enough on the AO2 requirements of the task, although some did do this very well.

This essay exemplifies the high standard of responses that were characteristic of this question.

Existentialism aims to reject the tendency of humans to restrict our options in life. There is a particular emphasis on denying generic moral standards, instead embracing our freedom and individuality. Jean-Paul Sartre offers a humanist version of existentialism; his ideas differ to that of Kierkegaard, the "founding father" of existentialism, in that he takes Dostoyevsky's quote "without God everything is permissible" as a starting point. His views are unlike those of Aristotle as he ~~did~~^{did} not believe in human nature as a basis for moral judgement while Sartre provides a theory for guidance on life. Mary Warnock in "The Philosophy of Sartre" called him a "metaphysical moral theorist" in that he provides little or no answer to those questioning how to live life. Gabriel Marcel was the first to call him an "existentialist", yet it was many years later when he accepted this title.

Sartre influenced philosophical thought with his humanist theories. In his lecture *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, first delivered in Paris, October 1945, he used an example of an artisan making a paperknife to demonstrate his idea that "existence precedes essence". A paperknife, he said, is made with the idea that it will serve purpose as a paperknife, this is its essence. Human beings, however, have no such essence as there is no God; this echoes Nietzsche's idea that "God is dead" in



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The candidate knew the topic very well and had a fluent command of their material.

his book "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" while some Christian existentialists may say God is the artisan who designed us to love and honour him, Sartre rejected this and said we lack a pre-determined future.

This lack of destiny Sartre called "radical freedom". Most people do not realise the extent to which they are free - "every existing thing is born without reason, ~~then~~ prolongs itself out of weakness and dies by chance". Sartre also distinguished between what he calls in-itself and for-itself. In-itself are things which were made with a purpose in mind; the essence of a table is that it will always be a table. Humans as for-itself, completely free to choose who we are and what we be. However, most people according to Sartre do not embrace this freedom; we feel the need for structure and purpose in life, and therefore often define ourselves by our career or situation in life. This Sartre calls "bad faith" - a for-itself acting as an in-itself. While Sartre acknowledges that we cannot change our facticity, or unchangeable factors e.g. height, he maintains that by altering our perception a situation may appear different.

Sartre goes on to define three emotional implications of bad faith. The first of these is abandonment or forsakenness, and the choice of word reminds us that without God, we are alone in the universe. Sartre said that "God does not exist, and it is necessary to draw the consequences of his absence to an end". Abandonment is the emotion we suffer upon realising that God is not there to guide us, and that any actions we complete are fully our own responsibility. We have

no preset future for which we can blame someone else, but are completely free to choose our own path in life.

Another implication Sartre describes is anguish. In "Philosophy: The Classics" Nigel Warburton says that "the position of someone making decisions about his or her life is one of anguish". Anguish is the realization of the extent to which we are free. It is different from fear because fear is being afraid of actions out of our control; anguish is being afraid of our own freedom and the acts we could potentially do. While it may sound liberating to realize this, Sartre said we are "condemned to be free"; anguish does not bring relief from restraint, but heightens responsibility and adds metaphorical weight to individuals. Sartre goes on to adopt ~~some~~ Kant's idea of the universalizability of moral judgements. In Christopher Hampton's "Jean-Paul Sartre's: Existentialism and Humanism" it is illustrated that Sartre believes we are "legislators" for all of humanity; when we act, we agree that it is an acceptable way for the rest of mankind to act also.

The third implication of bad faith is despair, which Sartre says means "that we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our will". Despair is the realization that the world can stop things we want from happening; while we are fully in control of our own actions, we cannot control those of others. Despair can, in turn, lead to quietism: complete withdrawal and inaction of the world. Sartre said that the mindset of one in quietism is the idea "let others do what I

cannot."

In "Existentialism and Humanism" Sartre gives a true example of his pupil, who is faced with a dilemma. He has the option to either fight in England with the Free French to liberate France, or stay at home with his ailing mother. Both options have negative consequences; if he ~~stays with his~~ leaves his mother she will be left upset and alone. However, if he joins the Free French but the attempt fails the pupil loses any opportunity to make something of himself; he worries that his "life might vanish like water into sand." Sartre offers him advice, after explaining that both Christian and Kantian approaches would not work for this situation. The pupil is experiencing both anguish and abandonment; he realises he alone is free to make his decision, and nobody else will dictate to him how he should live his life. Sartre tells him "you are free, therefore choose". This is a real-life example of how people experience emotional implications as a result of bad faith.

To some extent Sartre's ideas influenced philosophical thought. His thinking offers a secular alternative to those who are not religious believers, but may still require guidance in life. By saying God does not exist, Sartre removes pressure from those who felt they had to live with an blueprint God determined for them.

Another way Sartre influenced philosophical thought is the way that his idea of abandonment forces

people to take full responsibility for their actions. This will influence those who believe in destiny; only the individual can determine what they make of life, and blame cannot be shifted onto others. This in turn could make people evaluate their life and strive to be a better person.

Sartre's ideas also influence philosophical thought by the way that they release all pressure on individuals. We are completely free to do as we wish, with no restraint or restriction. This again could force people to evaluate their life; if someone wants their life to be good, or meaningful, they alone are responsible for this happening.

However, Sartre's ideas also have a negative effect on philosophical thought. Firstly, it could be said that he overestimates the extent of human freedom. Social and economic restraint can affect us more than Sartre allows for in his ideas. Society also shapes us and conditions us as to what we believe is possible, which Sartre himself is a victim of. In Jeff Mason's article "Sartre's Essential Humanism" Mason says Sartre "is shaped by the traditions he seeks to transcend". Indeed Sartre's historical context has a huge impact on his work; having been part of World War II and in prison, it is inevitable that he would want to fight for freedom.

Sartre's ideas also negatively affect philosophical thought by focusing on the alone individual. He puts particular emphasis on the idea that people are alone or abandoned, and seems to have no recognition of the

idea that people are part of a society, he also fails to take into account any sense of obligation or duty, which is arguably a large factor of a life free from chaos. His individualistic ideas stretch to include human relationships; while he himself did not believe in marriage, he had a life-long affair with Simone de Beauvoir. However, in his book "Being and Nothingness" he describes humanity as a "wretched passion". This negatively affects philosophical thought as it puts a very negative spin on life, taking away elements which arguably make life worthwhile.

Another way that Sartre's ideas could have a negative impact on philosophical thought is the way that his ideas could be seen as justifying immoralities. A person with good intentions, but who is evil, could be accepted by a follower of Sartre's thought. For example, Hitler's anti-semitic ideas in World War II were in good faith; because he is acting as a legislator for humanity, it could be seen as acceptable to conduct a genocide on one's individual racial hatred, even though the majority of a society would disagree.

Quietism is also an example of a way that Sartre's ideas affect philosophical thought. While some people may withdraw from the world, we would recognise this as clinical depression. By

making the condition an "ism" as it were. Sartre seems to condone this and make it appear that it is a normal way for humans to behave while quietism could have a ~~poss~~ positive effect by enabling people to later appreciate the good things in life. Sartre seems to refer to quietism as a state that is inevitable.

There is also an influence on philosophical thought by the way Sartre appears to contradict himself. In "Existentialism and Humanism" Sartre refers to Existentialism as "a doctrine of action". However, the emotional implications he describes are all as a result of acting in the wrong way and living in bad faith while it seems that he attempts to counteract the effects of bad faith by outlining anguish, abandonment and despair, it could be said that the reaction to this is enough to push one towards quietism, hence bringing further inaction.

Sartre's ideas could potentially have influenced philosophical thought a great deal particularly because of the context. At a time of war, when evil and suffering are clear, it would be easy for religious believers to turn their backs on God and ask "what is this happening?". Sartre's ideas would help explain war in a godless way and do

not undermine the attributes of the traditional God.

Overall it is clear that Sartre's ideas had a large impact on philosophical thought. His secular alternative provides guidance to those who require it, weak as it may be. His contribution to existentialism offers another side to Kierkegaard's Christian strand of the theory, making it accessible for more people.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

There is no substitute for sound knowledge of the chosen topic. Know your field!

Grade boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw boundary mark	50	41	36	31	27	23	19	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	100	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

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