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Examiners' Report

June 2011

GCE Religious Studies 6RS02 1B

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Introduction

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Investigations Paper of June 2011 demonstrated a high level of scholarship evident across all areas of study and many answers demonstrated the engagement that candidates had with their area of investigation. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. 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 stress again that the 'Investigations' unit 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.

Whilst most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option there were still a few entries for particular areas of study where consideration regarding entry for a different area of study may have been beneficial to the candidate. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper. There was evidence of candidates choosing a different question on the paper to the question they had clearly prepared for before the examination.

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 and that candidates are clear about which question they have been prepared for on the paper.

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 or by answering a question that has been written for a topic they have not studied.

Question 1

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE; MEDITATION

There was a broad range of interesting, well-researched 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. There was evidence of a formulaic quality of responses by some candidates who apparently relied on the same source. Better responses ventured towards a wide range of sources deploying a wide range of scholars, ideas and traditions. The psychology of religion material has increased in popularity and this material was well handled. Many candidates drew on Dawkins with the better candidates doing so with authority. However, there were several cases of Dawkins being used uncritically regardless of whether the candidate agreed or disagreed with his views.

The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have 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 interesting discussions of a range of different thinkers. Of the weaker responses 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 whether calling an experience religious is giving an ordinary experience a religious interpretation. The best responses considered the question and discussed thoroughly what a religious experience might be and how it is distinct from ordinary experience against the background of the scholarship they had engaged with. These candidates assessed the persuasiveness of their argument in relation to the range of scholarship deployed and some answers were very well done.

This essay is a solid attempt to answer the question.

Chosen question number: **Question 1** **Question 2** **Question 3**

A religious experience is an occurrence that cannot be logically explained and gives the experiencer an overwhelming sense of interaction with a transcendent reality.

Caroline Franks Davis split religious experience into 6 categories in order to interpret the experience better.

An interpretive experience can be religious or non-religious, as it is interpreted in different ways depending on an individual's perspective. This kind of experience relates to the question of whether an ordinary experience is simply being interpreted religiously. An example of this would be an answer to prayer. Some believe this answer has come from the divine.

Regenerative experiences are other things such as conversions, a person's faith is renewed by having this kind of experience. An example of this would be Nicki Cruz, a man brought up in a devil-worshipping family who then moved to New York and led a very negative lifestyle involving crimes, gangs and violence. It wasn't until he met a pastor who told him that even if he were to "cut him in to million pieces", he'd still love him. This comment triggered a conversion to a Christian faith for Cruz, an ordinary experience that he in fact interpreted religiously as a sign or trigger to believe in God.



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Examiner Comments

In the introduction the candidate interacts with the question through a brief explanation of a relevant scholar that is followed by an example which shows a good grasp of the demands of the question.

Revelatory experiences are enlightenment experiences the content of which can be religious or not but the religious content in a revelatory experience will make it a religious experience, the information is obtained immediately, taken with utter conviction, is impossible to explain or put into words, and often leads to reaffirmed faith.

A Quasi-sensory experience is an experience involving a vision or a voice and a ruminous experience is a feeling of God's holiness. Both of these experiences imply some form of religious involvement.

Lastly, mysticism is a form of religious experience that cannot be logically explained and involves a feeling of being at one with God, an example of this which could prove its religious interpretation is St. Theresa's story. She prayed for 27 years in order to contact God and feel at one with him and after all these years she feels she God is within her and she has reached a "oneness" with God.

Richard Swinburne once said that "An omnipotent and perfectly good creator would seek to interact with his creation", this quote highlights Swinburne's belief that religious experiences can occur and often they will be of a religious kind. Swinburne feels that when it comes to proving or disproving a religious experience and defining it as either just an ordinary experience or one with religious meaning, you should two principles should be taken into account:

The principle of credulity simply means that, "If X seems to

be present, then probably X is present." What he means by this is the obvious and most simple answer is likely to be believable much like the Ockham's Razor theory, this quote implies what appears obvious and likely should be credited as true.

The principle of testimony is refer to believing the witnesses of the religious experience, if no other people are there present to witness the event the words of the experient are to be taken as the truth.

These are principles that have been criticized by such scholars as David Hume and John Hick.

Hick's example of the "duck or hare" picture acts as a device for proving that people have different perspectives and therefore make different interpretations of an event. What one person may view as having religious meaning, another may view as ordinary.

Similarly Hume's critique was the problem of testimony in these situations, he felt religious experience was impossible to falsify because only the experient knows the truth about their experience and often these experiences are ineffable and impossible to put in to words. Hume once controversially stated that due to the first few accounts of ~~miraculous~~ miraculous events coming from "barbarous nations" they are inaccurate and should not be taken relied upon as truthful or interpreted correctly, he felt that ~~only people~~ of very few people had the background, intelligence education and intelligence to make such judgements on these events. His comments were criticized for being elitist and often it was argued that a person of sufficient intelligence and well-bred

upbringing could not be ~~so~~ identified. ~~It was rather what~~
~~made a person of that~~ who was to say who was capable of
~~deciding~~ interpreting what a religious experience is?

Ludwig Wittgenstein's ~~the~~ referred to the notion of "seeing-as".
This meant that ~~an experience~~ any experience can be interpreted differently
by different people due to individual perspectives which is similar to
that of Heidegger's view and can be used to support the claim that
"Calling an experience religious is merely giving an ordinary experience a
religious interpretation."

William James took a different stance on the subject and
implied that due to individual interpretation people can have a
personal relationship with God. He explains the religious experiences as
taking ordinary emotions and directing them at the divine. Again, this
mix between something ordinary creating religious interpretations provides
perhaps provides some form of support for the previous claim. *

Fraud looked more closely at the psychological aspect of
religious experience and claimed it was simply an interpretation of
an ordinary experience as something ^{religious} in order to feel protected
by some form of God. It is human nature for humans to seek answers
and by interpreting our ordinary experiences ~~as~~ as religious we can
enable ourselves to gain reassurance.

* James feels that ^{the} the result of a religious experience is what
will show whether it should be interpreted religiously or not.

Atheistic views often clash with religious views on subjects
like this, it is often a different perspective that will gauge whether a
person feels they have experienced something ordinary or with

religious meaning behind it. The ^{main} issues that scholars have argued upon is the fact that religious experiences, religious or not, are hard to disprove even as in most cases, especially religious experiences are said to be personal to an individual and ineffable. This causes many problems in identifying whether the experience even occurred let alone whether it was religious or not.

The sheer variety of miraculous events and religious experiences recorded may also cancel one another out. Due to there not being a set definition of a religious experience, they are often so varied, ^{it} ~~know~~ is not possible to know which are genuine.

All these issues point towards interpretation and perspective being the biggest problem when identifying a religious experience. The 6 categories by Frankl Danks go some way in making interpretation and identification clearer ~~but this doesn't eradicate the problem of~~ ~~examining~~ and does address the argument that such things as revelations have to have religious context in order to make them a religious experience.

Individuals could misinterpret an experience but there will never be any way of knowing for sure, a scholar once said, "a religious experience can't be repeated twice, unlike a scientific experiment" and this is exactly why religious experiences are so hard to falsify, prove or interpret exactly in the same way by every individual.



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Examiner Tip

Examining and commenting on a good range of appropriate scholarship often results in a well written, balanced study. However, a brief study might not cover the ground sufficiently. Expand points where you can!

Question 2

MIND AND BODY

The question attracted scholarly responses and was very well done by some candidates who were effective at analysing the question and discussing the relevance of their research in this context. A popular approach for this question focussed on Life after Death as a way of analysing the difficulties or implications of accounting for the difference between mind and body. The question invited some very thorough responses offering a technically competent, detailed, analysis of dualism and monism accompanied by an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses skilfully targeted at the question. There was evidence, however, of candidates who did not do justice to their A01 material in their evaluation because they were less confident about discussing the question. It is encouraging to see such a wide range of scholars included in responses in this Area of Study; weaker candidates included learned material which did not answer the question set and were defined by a simplistic approach and difficulty in manipulating the material.

This essay shows a clear command of the topic. The candidate answers the question fluently.

Chosen question number: **Question 1** **Question 2** **Question 3**

Dualism, the proposition that the mind is distinct from the body, ~~is~~ demonstrates clear ~~is~~ arguments that offer the possibility that the mind is ~~some~~ different from the body. While there are varieties within dualism as to the relationship between the mind and body, they all support the view that they are distinct entities to at least some extent. The strongest proponents of this argument are Descartes and Plato, who ~~is~~ argue for substance dualism; however their arguments are not ~~is~~ without flaws, which have led to the development of many other kinds of dualism to try and solve these problems. Property dualism, epiphenomenalism and occasionalism have all been suggested to combat the problem of interactionism, yet all face problems of their own. Therefore, dualism can merely offer an argument in support of the body being different from the mind, just is viable to an admittedly significant extent, but still has ~~unresolved~~ ^{unresolved} conflicts, as ~~it~~ can be ~~criticised~~ ^{criticised} at its ~~own~~ ^{own} ~~core~~ ^{core}.

The earliest ~~form~~ significant form of dualism can be found in Plato's 'Phaedo', set on the final day before Socrates' self-administered ~~at~~ execution. Here, Plato introduces the concept of the Φ forms; unchanging, eternal entities which



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Examiner Comments

The introduction clearly shows the grasp the candidate has over their material which, is clearly sustained throughout the essay.

~~the~~ ~~to~~ are the embodied, true Φ forms of concepts and objects which are on ~~the~~ the earth ephemerally. From ~~the~~ the concept of the forms, Plato argues for the immortality of the soul, which therefore must be a distinct entity from the body. Aristotle defines a substance as something that can exist independently, and so using this definition, Platonic dualism can be seen as substance dualism as the soul can survive, and therefore ~~to~~ exist independently from, the body. Plato states that the soul is imprisoned in the body during our earthly life and so is forced to explore the forms through sense organs. For Plato, death is defined as separation of the soul and the body and a time when the soul can grasp true comprehension of the forms through seeing them rather than perceiving them through unreliable senses. From his argument that the soul can experience the forms in death, Plato forms the argument from recollection. He describes Φ how we can perceive the embodied forms of the true forms on earth, such as recognising that two sticks are unequal but that we cannot perceive the Φ form of Equality. Therefore we must have some knowledge of the forms to recognise that we are ~~to~~ perceiving things that do not reach their level of purity.

~~From this~~ from this, Plato argues that we ~~must~~ must have seen the pure forms at some point and thus the soul must have existed ~~before~~ before its earthly life and so must ~~have~~ be immortal.

Plato also uses the forms to suggest the soul's immortality and thus distinction from the body using the argument from affinity. He argues that while the body is physical, visible and composite and so able to be destroyed or corrupted, the soul

is a simple unity that cannot be destroyed. The soul, he argues, must be immaterial as it must share some affinity with the forms if it is to truly comprehend them. ~~and the more~~ ~~the~~ more ~~Plato~~ philosophy a soul practices, the more form-like it becomes and therefore the less able to be destroyed it becomes. The body and the soul must therefore be different as the body is finite and will at some point cease to exist, whereas the soul can potentially become immortal.

However, Plato's arguments from recollection and affinity can be greatly criticised as they depend upon us accepting what he states the forms to be. While we undoubtedly perceive beauty and equality to levelling degrees and never in a pure form, this does not mean that pure, immaterial forms exist. ~~Plato~~ Plato offers viable propositions if his assumptions about the forms are true. However, in his arguments, the distinctiveness of the distinctiveness of the soul is greatly supported by but is purely based upon unsubstantiated propositions.

Plato offers a final distinction making ~~the~~ the immortality of the soul with his argument from opposites. He argues that everything comes to be from its opposite and that it is a two-way process. I come to be lost from being

alive and so we must also become ~~the~~ 'living' from being dead. Plato thus demonstrates that the soul is essentially

argument ~~to~~ for the soul and the body being different in his proposition of Substance or Cartesian dualism. In his 'Meditations', Descartes shows the soul to ~~be~~ the essence of human identity, and a very different substance to the body. In his Fifth and Sixth Meditations, Descartes describes the difference between the body and mind. ~~He~~ ~~body~~ He describes how he can 'enumerate the extended thing's various parts. [He] set aside [s] & to these parts certain sizes, shapes, ~~masses~~ locations and movements' and so demonstrates the quantifiable nature of the body. The body is a ~~spatial~~ extended, material, visible and locatable thing, an object fit for scientific study. In contrast, the mind is 'a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, desires, wills, refuses and which also imagines and senses' - 'a thinking thing'. Descartes shows that a mind is different because it is a thinking, non-spatial, non-extended, unlocatable thing that has no position, size, shape or is bound to the laws of physics. ~~That~~ Ultimately, the mind is ~~everything~~ ~~the~~ ~~body~~ the opposite of everything the body is, which is ~~its~~ problematic to a small extent as it has no ~~of~~ positive properties. Descartes's descriptions of mind and body support the view that mind and body are different to the ~~of~~ greatest extent.

The difference between mind and body are also further explained in his 'Method of the Discourse', where Descartes demonstrates that the ~~the~~ mind is indubitable while the body is ~~can~~ always be doubted. ~~How~~ To determine what is essentially not real, Descartes rejects everything that is false. Therefore, Descartes rejects the physical as false as it could essentially be an elaborate illusion played by ~~a~~ God or even Satan.

recycled in the process of transmigration. In the interim between death and life, the soul has the opportunity to experience the forms unimpeded with matter and so is their quest for form, providing also the knowledge that Plato describes in the argument from recollection.

Therefore, the mind is different from the body because there ~~is~~ are points where the mind exists independently from the body, uninhibited by ~~the~~ the body and is able to pursue the highest form of knowledge.

Plato's argument from ~~recollection~~ opposites is not so severe in proving the difference between mind and body to a large extent because flaws can be found in it. Aristotle states that substance cannot have contraries and so ~~is~~ Plato's argument that the living soul can ~~come from~~ come from a dead one as they are opposites does not hold. However, it cannot always be argued that ~~being~~ the process is always ~~not~~ a two-way one. Youth and old age are opposites and while we become old from being young, we cannot become ~~old~~ young from being old. Living and dying could also be such a process. Locally, it does not seem reliable but that ~~the~~ the body would come into being from the union of a dead (separated) soul and a body. If the soul had achieved separation from the body it would surely wish to stay dead. Therefore while the argument from opposites offers a support for the soul's immortality, it does not prove the ~~the~~ mind is different from the body to any significant extent because it has ~~unavoidable~~ flaws that bring its ~~reliability~~ legitimacy into question.

~~As~~ ~~the~~ Descartes offers perhaps the most famous

argument for the soul and the body being different in his proposition of Substance or Cartesian dualism. In his 'Meditations', Descartes shows the soul to be the essence of human identity and a very different substance to the body. In his Fifth and Sixth Meditations, Descartes describes the difference between the body and mind. ~~He~~ He describes how he can 'enumerate the extended thing's various parts. [He] set axioms [5] to these parts: certain sizes, shapes, masses, locations and movements' and so demonstrates the quantifiable nature of the body. The body is a spatial, extended, material, visible and locatable thing, an object fit for scientific study. In contrast, the mind is 'a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, desires, wills, refuses and which also imagines and senses' - 'a thinking thing'. Descartes shows that a mind is different because it is a thinking, non-spatial, non-extended, unlocatable thing that has no position, size, shape or is bound to the laws of physics. ~~That~~ Ultimately, the mind is ~~everything~~ ~~the body~~ the opposite of everything the body is, which is ~~not~~ problematic to a small extent as it has no positive properties. Descartes's descriptions of mind and body support the view that mind and body are different to the ~~of~~ greatest extent.

The difference between mind and body are also further explained in his 'Method of Mr. Descartes', where Descartes demonstrates that the mind is indubitable while the body is ~~can~~ always be doubted. ~~How~~ To determine what is essentially not real, Descartes rejects everything that is false. Therefore, Descartes rejects the physical as false as it could essentially be an elaborate illusion played by a God or even Satan.

However, ~~the~~ Descartes demonstrates that his own existence cannot be doubted because ^{for} the mere fact that [he] thought about doubting the truth of other things, provides very clear and very strong evidence that [he] exist[s]. It follows very evidently and very clearly that [he] exist[s]. Descartes is perhaps best known for his statement 'Cogito ergo sum', I think therefore I am. If this statement were false, he would not be able to think it, for he would not exist to think; it has incorrigibility. As ~~the~~ the existence of the mind as a thinking thing is established without doubt, Descartes demonstrates that ~~our~~ any physical nature cannot also be an essential part of our existence because the physical can be doubted, but ~~the~~ our existence cannot. According to Leibniz's Principle of Identity, things are only identical if they possess exactly the same properties at exactly the same time. As therefore, the mind possesses 'indubitability', as René Descartes describes it, and the body does not, they cannot be the same thing.

While Descartes' argument from indubitability seems to stand up strongly as support for the difference between body and mind, it is certainly not indubitable ~~to~~ itself. The most common problem ~~to~~ found with his proposition is that it leads to solipsism, the view that only our own minds can be known with certainty and so it is conceivable that only our own minds exist. If I only know I exist without doubt because I am thinking this proposition, it is a huge inductive generalization to say that all people must be thinking beings whose existence is certain. ~~to be only real~~

However, it seems an absurdity that I am the only thing really in existence in the world. Solutions are offered to this by arguing that if ~~the~~ mental states are defined behaviourally, functionally or physiologically, their ~~presence~~ presence can be verified and it is proved that ~~there are~~ there exists other minds. However, ~~the~~ the dualist argues that ~~the~~ just because states can be defined as for example, physiological states, it does not necessarily follow that they are such states. ~~Having~~ Having physiological identity does not ensure that every being with such an identity has qualitative experience. Therefore the cartesian method of dualism can be criticised and it does not fully support the difference between ~~mind~~ mind and body because it could lead to inconceivable situations.

The greatest criticism of ~~the~~ cartesian dualism is, however, interactionism. It can clearly be questioned how a non-spatial created substance impacts on the physical which is empirically seen to only be moved by the physical. The substance seems too distinct and mutually exclusive to interact. Descartes suggests that the 'seat of the soul' is in the pineal gland, chosen ~~because~~ because it is central, not bilateral and not present in animals. However this still does not explain how the mental causes ~~a~~ such a gland to react.

~~In~~ In Phaedo, Simplicius posits the ~~to~~ ~~where~~ theory which has now developed to epiphenomenalism that the ~~the~~ mental is caused by the physical but ~~does not~~ cannot impact on the physical itself. However this goes against the view that

our thoughts and beliefs impact the way we act. Property Dualism also suggests the interaction is purely physical to mental in it states that mental states are solely non-physical properties of material states. ~~The~~ Descartes therefore supports the mind and body being different to a large extent but ~~does not show the way~~ cannot be tested ~~completely~~ completely as no ~~few~~ logical explanations have been yet found to explain the interaction he posits.

Overall, dualism shows the mind to be completely different to the body, although perhaps not completely independent. ~~By~~ By Armstrong's definition of a substance, dualism ~~is~~ cannot fully support the view that they are different as neither Plato nor Aristotle are able to show the ~~is~~ mind to be capable of independent existence without problems. However using Leibniz's Law of Identity, dualism does prove that mind and body are different because they ultimately never have exactly the same properties at exactly the same time, even ~~if they may be dependent to a certain extent.~~ if ~~flow~~ with interaction can be found. They can never be ~~be~~ identical if they exhibit any differences, a suggestion that cannot reasonably be doubted in light of their arguments.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

There is no substitute for knowing your field. It is always worth reading around the topic once you have grasped the basic ideas. Don't be afraid to try reading material that pushes the boundaries of your thinking beyond knowledge into critical appreciation.

Question 3

A STUDY OF ONE/MORE PHILOSOPHERS OF RELIGION

Good quality responses focussed on an interesting range of philosophers with many candidates choosing to compare and contrast two different philosophers; thus allowing for easier AO2 comment on the insight into religion and/or God that might be derived from any the study of the philosophy of religion. This question attracted a large variety of responses with really good accounts of the works of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kierkegaard, Nagel, Nietzsche, Leibniz, Bonheoffer, Marx and Sartre. One of the most popular combinations was Kierkegaard and Sartre. The obvious enthusiasm so many candidates had for the area of study was clearly conveyed by very mature essays in which the significant contribution to the philosophy of religion was very carefully teased out in the context of specific insights that might be gained about religion and/or God. Most gave a good analysis of the of the philosopher they had investigated. The best responses referred to a range of ideas or works by the chosen philosopher and placed them in the correct context of their time whilst assessing their work with great ease.

There was evidence of a variety of quality of response and weaker responses simply offered a biographical account of the scholar in question without paying attention to the demands of the question. Occasionally this approach is justified in that some responses related Kierkegaard's life experiences to the development of his philosophy; however, weaker responses relied too heavily on irrelevant storytelling, ignored the question and simply offered an account of the main highlights of a particular scholar's thinking without further comment. In this range not many responses included much by way of comment from scholars on the views of their philosophers, and although this was not a requirement it did enhance the responses of candidates who were able to do it. Some candidates chose one idea/argument from their philosopher and did a strengths or weaknesses of that view; whilst this was not necessarily a bad approach it was most often done at a simpler level and not fully focused on the question in terms of concluding about the insights into religion and/or God when assessing or studying these ideas. Some candidates tended to argue from the outset for the existence of God rather than answering the question; this was especially apparent in responses that focussed on Aquinas.

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