

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

GCE Religious Studies – Investigations
(6RS02)

Paper 1D The Study of World Religions

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UNIT 2: Religious studies - Investigations

Introduction

General Comments

This unit provides for a balance of teacher-directed and more independent student enquiry. This 'Investigations' unit offers the opportunity to undertake individual research into a topic of particular interest to the candidates. This is the reason why each question includes the expression, "with reference to the topic you have investigated". The ability to select and manage individual research material to fit into the demands of the question is an important discriminator in terms of assessment.

It is for this reason that the mark scheme for this unit is a generic one. There are no indicative mark schemes per question given the fact that there are so many legitimate ways of answering questions based on independent research.

The two assessment objectives should permeate this whole process. Candidates should determine whether there is sufficient material to access a variety of appropriate sources (AO1) and to evaluate alternative views (AO2). Candidates may monitor their progress with reference to the criteria in the level descriptors across both AO1 and AO2. The assessment criteria are always mentioned in each question. Typically this is achieved with the trigger words, 'examine' for AO1 and 'comment on' for AO2. The assessment of the candidates work is based on the application of these objectives.

Some candidates performed well on this unit. It was clear that some candidates had selected topics of genuine interest to them. There was evidence of substantial background reading which was used effectively in answers. Candidates presented well-structured responses based on the question and were able to use their knowledge to address the focus of the question. A feature of high quality answers was the ability to relate to the question throughout the answer. Candidates performed well across both assessment objectives with detailed content and cogent argument.

Some candidates did not select their material in accordance with the specific question. Some candidates could have adapted their same material so as to use it more effectively to address the question. In some cases the question was only briefly mentioned and in others there was limited reference to the question in the final few sentences. Some responses at the lower levels drew on sources that were below the standard required at GCE level. These tended to be descriptive and more narrative rather than analytical. Some responses at the lower levels were short and lacked elaboration and the substantiation necessary at this level.

Some centres chose to concentrate on the same topic for a number of candidates. This was useful when backed up with relevant sources, whereby candidates could develop their own slant and specialism on their selected topics. Occasionally, some responses became formulaic without targeted attention to the demands of the specific question. A key aim of this unit is to involve candidates as active participants in order to provide possibilities for open-ended enquiry and independent learning.

It is essential that candidates are entered for the area of investigation which is the best fit for the question on the paper. Candidates were not penalised if a cross was placed in a box that did not match the response.

Specific Comments – Paper 1D – The study of World Religions

6RS02_1D_Q01 – A study of one or more religions concerning ethical precepts and applied ethics

Question Introduction

The most popular topic in this question was on the ethical precepts of Jihad and their implications for applied ethics. Other topics included Buddhist and Hindu ethics.

- Some candidates included excellent information on greater and lesser Jihad with reference to scholars, The Qur'an and Hadiths.
- Good responses included detailed analysis and debates of alternative views with scholarly contributions.
- Good responses which focused on greater and lesser Jihad included a range of evidence and reasoned argument.
- Other topics that attracted investigation included abortion, with reference to two world religions.
- Higher level responses included strong evidence of scholars in the evaluation and well founded conclusions.

Exemplar 1

This is the first part of the answer on ethical precepts and applied ethics, in this case with reference to Buddhism.

Examiner Comment

The candidate examines some key Buddhist precepts and comments on issues related to abortion, and in this respect combines both AO1 and AO2.

The ethical precepts and applied ethics of religion raise important issues for today's society on ^{the} morality of what is right or wrong. These ethical precepts can cause difficult conflicting issues on certain debates, such as Buddhism and whether abortion is right or wrong.

In Buddhism the 5 precepts teach Buddhist ^{applied} ethics, and how to deal with difficult issues such as abortion, but these precepts themselves cause issues when one ^{PRECEPT} may ^{NOT} support abortion and another teaching may.

Buddhists are taught to follow the 5 precepts in order to stop suffering (Dukkha). In the attempt to reach enlightenment and stop their endless cycle of rebirths in samsara by following the precepts and the noble 8 fold path (NATGA).

The 5 precepts are 1. to abstain from harming living beings known as a kamsa. 2. To abstain from harmful speech. 3. To abstain from intoxicants. 4. To abstain from taking

What is not given. And 10. To abstain from sexual misconduct.

The first precept ^{Ahimsa} supports ~~some~~ ^{good} ~~Atayana~~ ^{views} that the Theravada ~~and~~ Buddhist view that abortion is wrong. This is because Theravada Buddhists teach the importance of following the Doctrines and the Dharma, especially the first precept of Ahimsa. Because of this Theravada Buddhists condemn abortion as it is a sacred ^{human} life. This is supported by Ikeda who said "a human life is more sacred than ^{millions} ~~thousands~~ of treasure being tipped into the sea. This is because in the traditional Buddhist view every human rebirth is very special, as it is only as a human that you can attain enlightenment and stop the cycle of Samsara. This is also supported by Lama Lopez ~~who~~ who spoke of one human rebirth being "more sacred than ~~other~~ universes of sacred jewels" This shows the importance of each sacred life.

Similarly the Catholic view on human life and abortion is very similar. This is because both the Theravada Buddhists and Catholics ~~share~~ use more conscience and Doctrines as a way to

uses apply their ethics to issues such as abortion. ~~The~~ Catholic view is both similar and different to the Theravada Buddhist view. Roman Catholics believe human life to be sacred because of the natural moral law theory which they follow. This is the belief that life is sacred as God created us in the image of God and our purpose is to procreate. The similarity of the importance of human life and that it ~~is sacred~~ starts at conception is a shared view of Buddhism and Christianity. Both the Theravada and Catholic views believe abortion to be wrong no matter what, as human life is sacred. However for different reasons. Catholics believe it to be sacred because of the purposes of ~~a~~ (supernatural) gods will. Where as Theravada Buddhists believe it to be sacred because they must follow the precept of Ahimsa and Karuna.

over
There are issues with these views. Catholics are taught in the 9 paragonments to "love thy neighbour and be compassionate beings. If a woman has been raped surely the compassionate thing would let her have an abortion? The same issues arise for Buddhism, if the most

Karuna thing to do is to let the women have an abortion, does this not go against Buddhism's own precept of Ahimsa and use of violence?

In Buddhism other Buddhist schools, such as Mahayana Buddhism, their teachings are based more on Karuna and helping others in their attempt not only to follow the Noble 8 fold path like Theravada Buddhism, (MAOGA) to develop Sila, Samadhi and prajna. But to reach Buddhhood by following the bodhisattva path. Where Upaya is taught to help others where by allowing skillful means to help the people around us. For example the story of the burning house in the sutra Lotus Sutra. Where a man skillfully lies breaking the precept of Ahimsa harmful speech to save his sons. Because of this the breaking of Ahimsa could be allowed allowing Mahayana Buddhist in cases to believe abortion to be allowed as it is ~~the~~ maybe seen as the most wise and compassionate thing to do (Karuna).

However there is problems with this if one can break the ethical precepts applied

no & issues how can we mely make a moral decision on taking a human life? when can it be justified.

Examiner Tip

The candidate highlights distinctive Theravada ethics in relation to some Christian traditions and later Buddhist traditions.

There are various methods of structuring answers to this topic. The method adopted by this candidates works well in terms of the integration of precepts with their application.

Exemplar 2

This is a full response on one of the most popular ways of answering this question by focusing on 'jihad'.

Examiner Comment

There is much good practice in this answer. The candidate clarifies key terms. There is effective use of a range of scholarship. The candidate considers a range of views and develops their own line of reasoning.

Jihad is one of the most commonly misinterpreted words of the 21st century. It could be argued that the cause of this is the media, who portray it as a 'holy war.' However Jihad is derived from the arabic root word 'Jahada,' meaning to "strive and struggle." The Prophet Muhammed PBUH once said after returning from battle, "we have returned from the ~~the~~ lesser Jihad to the greater Jihad" showing us there are two types of Jihads.

One type of Jihad is Jihad-ul-Asghar meaning lesser Jihad. It is fard Kiyafa meaning obligatory on every Muslim. There are many strict guidelines of Jihad ul Asghar for as stated in the Quran, "fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limit for Allah does not love a transgressor." ~~stated~~
~~the~~ Also whilst fighting Jihad ul Asghar there are many strict guidelines to follow which raise very difficult issues, such as not harming

wildlife, including trees and animals," showing the strict rules one needs to follow whilst undertaking Lesser Jihad. ~~How~~ In order to complete this one must first get through the struggles of the greater Jihad.

Greater Jihad, or also known as Jihad ul Akbar ~~is~~ is the "struggles against oneself," to eliminate ourselves from the temptations or ~~the~~ nafs (desires) one faces on a daily basis to become a good Muslim.

Hanza Yusuf a modern day American scholar said that "every bad action occurs because of a diseased heart," so in order to overcome these desires one must cleanse his heart, as "only those with a ~~clear~~ Qalb Saleem (sound heart) can enter Jannah," as stated in the Quran.

This shows that Jihad is an ethic as one ~~has~~ has to decide on what is morally right and wrong on a daily basis and can raise very difficult issues on how to overcome these nafs.

This ~~essay~~ ^{essay} will examine why the ^{ethics} ~~issue~~ of Jihad ~~is~~ ^{is} a very difficult ~~issue~~ issue and also that one needs to have a

Qalb Saleem in order to carry out both Jihad, however even to have a Qalb Saleem one needs to have the correct intention (niyyah)

One of the reasons as to why Jihad could be seen as a fallacious term is due to extremist Muslim groups portraying it as that.

Al Muhajiroun, a Muslim extremist group banned in the UK, are known for their terrorist activities, use Islam as a excuse for their killings. By taking Quranic quotes such as "slay them wherever you find them," they are tainting Islam, which is like a religion of peace as the Quran states, "killing one person is (like) killing the whole of mankind," showing the importance of life in Islam. So the Muhajiroun are morally as well as ethically wrong when it comes to defending their actions, and are one of the reasons Islam is seen as a religion of violence, when in fact it states, "do not kill ~~the~~ life, that which God has made sacred." suggesting there is no place in Islam for extremist

groups such as the Al Muhajiroun.

Their actions brought outrage in the Islamic world, with a fatwa being sent out.

Shaykh Afifi's fatwa, defending the transgressed, argues that there is no excuse for the Al Muhajiroun's actions, as they do not have authority or the right to make such decisions to use Islam in this way.

The scholar also argues that members of the Al-Muhajiroun do not have the correct Islamic ilm (^{knowledge} ~~understanding~~), which is what leads them to such actions.

This view is similar to another scholar and descendant of the Prophet Muhammed RBUH, - Habib Umar.

Habib Umar suggests that the youth of today turn to extremism, as it is the only route they know. People are claiming they are Shaykhs when they themselves don't have the correct knowledge or understanding of Islam themselves, which leads to disorientated meanings. For one to have the correct ilm of Islam it needs to

be through the sunnad, -Chain of transmission which can be traced back to the Prophet.

Through the sunnad only sound knowledge will be transmitted which shows Islam for what it is - a religion of peace.

However before having a qalb ilm (sound knowledge) one needs to get rid of the nafs - (desires) one has, so that nothing disorientates his understanding of Islam.

This poses the question which can raise difficult issues, ~~to~~ what exactly is a naf or what are nafs.

Nafs or desires are the struggles between deciding what is ~~to~~ right and ~~what~~ what is wrong for ~~the~~ Muslims.

There are many nafs when it comes to Jihad raising ethical questions, for example the killing of wildlife, as a rule of ~~the~~ lesser Jihad one must not harm wildlife, however there may be an occurrence when one may have to harm wildlife as a last resort, or to save oneself, this

poses the question of it is true Jihad or not.

There are also nafs and desires in Jihad Ul - Akbar as for example one might have the temptation to drink alcohol which is prohibited in Islam, so how does one overcome these nafs and desires.

According to the ~~to~~ Journal Minaret vol 8 "one should always be in a state of ~~of~~ ~~of~~ Zikr - (remembrance of Allah) and by always being in a state of Zikr one can overcome these desires and nafs. This then leads to the question how can one ~~be~~ always be in a constant state of Zikr?"

"Actions are judged according to intentions," so (Avran) so in order for one to have good actions ~~to~~ (Zikr) one needs to have good intentions (Niyyah). There are many example of young Muslims today who have good intentions however are misguided when it comes to their actions. An example of this includes Roshana Choudry, a young

Muslim woman who stabbed her local MP as he was for the war in Iraq. Whilst she had good intentions (to stand up for other Muslims), her actions were not morally and Islamically correct. ~~They are~~

In order for one to overcome greater Jihad, "one needs to have noble means for noble goals" according to Hamza Yusuf.

There is no point in having a noble goal for example give Charity is there is no noble intention, for example the money was stolen, or the result of a drug deal, both which are prohibited in Islam, so one needs to have a noble goal as well as noble intentions.

One can only gain noble intentions if one has sound knowledge, which can only be gained through sound scholars. As if people are told sound knowledge then they will act upon this and can cleanse their hearts. ~~It is~~ If the knowledge is misleading or said for ones own gain then the followers of that

knowledge are diseasing their hearts, which stops them from gaining the correct ilm and also ~~na~~ adding to their naafs.

In this current day and age one may ask where can you find correct knowledge from, especially as there is so much false and inaccurate information out there.

Radical Muslim Way is an online guide to sound knowledge from sound scholars including Hanza Yusuf, Habib Ali and Tariq Ramadan, which discourages young Muslims from committing acts of terror, and showing them the Sunnah-path of the Prophet.

Websites like this can help Muslims ~~In conclusion, in order to overcome the difficult~~ learn the correct path of Islam, ~~and~~ which can then lead onto the correct ~~intention~~ niyyah and ~~et~~ ilma. This can then help Muslims have a Qalb Sateem, leading to them promoting Islam for what is truly is.

In conclusion, in order to overcome the difficult issues, Jihad holds one must firstly gain sound knowledge from sound

Scholars, along with the right intentions, one can overcome their naifs in both lesser and Greater Jihad, to have a Qalb Saleem, which can enforce the state of zikr onto ~~the~~ them.

~~Qalb~~ The state of zikr can help a Muslim through anything as by always remembering Allah, a one will have that fear in them of doing anything unethical or morally wrong.

6RS02_1D_Q02 – Religious pluralism; inter-faith dialogue; religious practice in a multi-cultural society, including the UK

Question Introduction

This question was answered by few candidates. Amongst the responses marked, there was some very interesting work on the ethical teachings of sexuality and marriage in Islam. Some candidates selected an analysis of and debates about stances such as exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.

Candidates deployed a range of evidence and were able to draw sophisticated conclusions using sound religious terminology.

Exemplar 3

This is a full response on the topic of religion in society.

Examiner Comment

There are various ways candidates approach this area. This candidate analyses key terms such as exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.

It could be said that England today is more pluralistic than ever before both in terms of diversity of society and range of religious beliefs. Vast amounts of people have migrated from areas such as Asia and the middle east to the western world, bringing with them their beliefs and customs. British Christians interact with these people and learn about their beliefs; ~~they~~ ^{one} can also identify any similarities or differences in their beliefs. Fate is brought into question, whether people of Buddhist, Jewish or Muslim beliefs can find salvation as they do not follow Christianity. This essay will discuss the three main ideas related to religion in society: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Also it will discuss the major theologians related to these ideas: Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, John Hick and Gavin D'Costa.

Throughout history the church has been exclusivist. Augustine claimed that the only way to find salvation was through Christ. Yet he also believed in the concept of 'God-fearers' who can find salvation as they ~~were~~ ^{were} not aware of Christ's existence such as Moses. Another exclusivist is John Calvin ^{who} ~~he~~ claimed that only those that have been pre-destined can be saved. Also St. Thomas Aquinas said that salvation can only be found through

Christ as God's work was for Christians. Lastly the Roman Catholic church claims there is no salvation beyond itself, it reaffirmed this position in the First Vatican Council in 1868.

The major theologian this essay will discuss in relation to being an exclusivist in society is Karl Barth. He starts by stating that he ~~doesn't~~ ^{doesn't} want us to have the pretence that we know every thing in the world. He says that Christianity is the one true religion that salvation can be ~~found~~ ^{found} in. For Barth the church is at the centre of true religion and this is so for Christianity, ^{therefore} so it can be seen as true. Yet he does not claim that Christianity is superior. He says that religion is to do with humans and is grounded by the fact that God has become human. Barth says that humans in society create religion to solve their problems, he doesn't want Christianity to become a self-help system. No religion in itself is true, but Christianity is true as it has received God's revelation through God's grace, 'grace is the revelation of God', meaning that God has revealed himself to humans in the form of Jesus Christ. Barth can be seen as an exclusivist as he says that the only way to achieve salvation is through Christ, however he does not claim that Christianity is superior to other religions or that other religions are inferior, just that it has received God's revelation through the grace of God. A criticism of Barth is that he does not look into the other religions to identify if there are any truths. This is a problem as

he cannot claim that his view is true, unless he is able to prove others are false. Henrik Kierkegaard, like Barth, believes that the only way of finding salvation is through Christ. Yet he takes this further by saying that all other religions are forms of self-salvation, showing that in society he is more of an exclusivist than Barth.

Karl Rahner transformed the Roman Catholic Church in the 20th century by making it more inclusive. Rahner says that Christianity is the one true religion and that no other religion is equal to it. He claims that true religion is not a human pursuit to find God but God revealing himself to humans. This is true so for Christianity as it relies upon 'the ^{incarnation,} death and resurrection and salvation of the word of God becoming flesh', meaning that God became human and so ^{has} revealed himself to us. Rahner even goes on to acknowledge that Christianity has a pre-history, a time before Christ. Similar to Augustine he says that it is possible for people to find salvation outside the church because they were unaware of Christ. He says that other religions may have been granted some of God's grace because they contain not only natural knowledge of God but supernatural elements. He claims that it is possible for people unaware of Christ to find salvation until 'the gospel really enters the historical situation of the individual'. By this he means that until Christ salvation can be found. He believes that as well as ^{there} being definite truths in other religions, ^{there} ~~but~~ are also definite untruths. He uses

evidence from the Bible, for instance when St. Paul spoke to the people of a Greek island and said that some elements of their religion ~~are~~ ^{were} true. Yet ~~he~~ ^{Kanner} comes back to Christology by saying the only way to find salvation in society is through Christianity, so how far he is an inclusivist is debatable.

Rahner claims that if he is so far correct then we can call the people who are unaware of Christ anonymous Christians. This is a problem as many people of other faiths would not want to be called so. Rahner also dismisses pluralism by saying that ~~those~~ Christians can call those unaware of Christ anonymous Christians. A criticism of Rahner is that he does not actually look into other religions to see if there are any truths or virtues.

John Hick is a pluralist, he states that God is at the centre and that all religions are equal paths to God. He says that in all religions you can find 'deep devotion, true sainthood, and deep spiritual life'. Here, he claims, are what is needed to have a lawful religion. Barth and Rahner would disagree with this as they would claim that the only way to find salvation is through Jesus Christ. A criticism of Hick is that he moves away from ~~God~~ ^{Christ} being at the centre to God being at the centre, by doing this he is denying the homotheism, that God and Jesus are one. Also one had that Hick speaks of ~~some~~ God of Immanuel.

Kant, who is a moral distant order creator. This causes God to become less personal, so Baron and Kanner would disagree. Hick claims that all religions have an a priori truth and ~~an~~ a posteriori truth, so are expressed and eternal. To Hick's credit he does look into other religions to find evidence of these truths. He uses an example in Buddhism where the incarnate Buddhas are the a priori and the heavenly Buddha is the a posteriori. Hick claims that all religions are equal it is just that we see God through 'different lenses' so our beliefs differ. Hick's view is positive for society as it claims that all people, apart from atheists, can find salvation.

Kevin D'Costa comes up with three different types of pluralism, firstly pluriform who believe that all religions are equal and all lead to the same divine reality. Secondly unitary pluralists who believe that there are different paths to different divine realities. Thirdly ethical pluralism, where all religions have certain ethical practices that lead to a divine reality. Hick is a pluriform pluralist as he believes that all religions are equal and true and so therefore they all lead to the same God. D'Costa also has three major criticisms for pluralism, the most important for me is the fact that it takes away the orthodox claims of each religion, meaning that little respect is shown as other religions believe themselves to be true. Another is that certainly

bits of religion must be found and ~~doctrines~~ ^{doctrines} must be changed in order for the religion to fit with the idea of pluralism. This is a problem as it weakens one claim of pluralism. Lastly the fact that pluralism is its own greatest ~~truth~~ ^{obstacle} ~~as it~~ claims that it is more superior to any other view. ~~even~~ So pluralism may be seen as exclusive.

All of the ideas are well supported by one chosen theologian. Karl Barth believes that Christianity is the one true religion and salvation can only be found through it. However he does not state that Christianity is superior or that any other religion is inferior so is respecting the orthodox claims of other religions, unlike Rahner and Hick. Karl Rahner's inclusivist view is better than the Roman Catholic's restrictive view as he claims that salvation can be found outside the church for anonymous Christians. Yet he still claims that salvation can only be won by Christ. Also he is disrespectful to other religions in society as many of them would not like to be called anonymous Christians. Hick's pluralist view has many flaws as ~~for~~ in order for religions to fit ~~his~~ ^{pluralism} view he has to find small ~~bits~~ ^{areas} of those religions, ~~that~~ ^{Chris} makes his claim weak as ~~there~~ ^{there} is not much concrete evidence. Also like Rahner he disregards the personal views of other religions in society by saying that all religions lead to the same divine reality as they would not see it that way.

Overall in this modern society I think that Karl Popper's
exclusionist view would be the best. This is because you are
showing respect to other religions whilst affirming your own
views. The criticism of Popper is that he doesn't try to
prove that his own belief is true however by doing this he
is saying that no religion is superior or inferior to one another.
So with Popper's view in society you are showing the freedom
necessary in a democracy; by not imposing your views on others
but being free to affirm your own.

Examiner Tip

The candidate structures the response very clearly. There is very effective use of scholarship, whereby key contributors are identified and examined. Throughout the response there is on-going critical appraisal of the various stances.

6RS02_1D_Q03 – Contrasting standpoints on beliefs about God and/or existence

Question Introduction

This was a fairly popular question. There were some good, detailed accounts showing proficiency of language and understanding of key beliefs about the teachings of life after death in Islam. Some candidates provided good information about the different beliefs about life after death in Islam; however some did not fully explain Christian teachings on this topic. Some candidates provided general responses providing their knowledge on the wider topic area rather than directly addressing the question.

Exemplar 4

This extract is the beginning of a response on contrasting standpoints. In this example the candidate selects Islamic and Christian beliefs about life after death.

Examiner Comment

The candidate refers to Islamic terms in a proficient manner and this extract contains reasonable detail on Islamic beliefs.

In this essay I will comment on and examine Muslim and Christian beliefs on life after death and on Human existence.

Both Muslims and Christians believe in life after death. Muslims believe that Allah is Al-Khaliq (The creator) which means that Allah created the universe and will end it too. Muslims believe that if there was no life after death, any other belief in God becomes irrelevant. Akhirah is a vital belief for Muslims as they believe this ~~this~~ life is temporary and is preparing us for our Akhirah which is never ending. (SAWAR) Allah can only give and take life. 'Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave. Her term being fixed by writing' (Sura 3:145)

However Muslims believe that Allah has given humans free will. Muslims believe

That the good or bad deeds that you do in this life will effect your spirit, which is given to you by Allah. If a person does good or righteous deed their spirit will develop and grow properly but if a person does bad or evil deeds their spirit will not develop and will suffer harm. This constitutes the reward or punishment for one's deed. 'Every soul shall have a taste of death' (Surah 3:185)

Islam teaches that the prophets were sent to humanity to spread the belief of Allah and life after death. 'every one shall have to die' (SAWAR) Denying this is a sign of denying God. For those who deny God, when they die they will realise their mistakes and will ask God for another chance so that they can repent but by then it'll be too late because muslims believe that Allah only gives one chance in this life because it is a test.

Like muslims, christians also believe that the deed that you do in this life

will mould your after life. Liberal Protestants believe that the soul can exist independently and can survive death. 'When buried it is a physical body; when raised it is a spiritual body.' (1 Corinthians 5:6)

Examiner Tip

The question is focused on contrasting standpoints. In this extract and also across the response in general the candidate tends to present more detail on Islam with only passing reference to Christianity.

Advice for candidates:

- Manage the material from the investigations to focus on the demands of the question
- Use appropriate sources
- Show an understanding of the topic
- Present a thoughtful analysis of the material
- Make effective use of evidence and argument
- Comment on alternative views
- Show a clearly expressed viewpoint.

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