



Examiners' Report

June 2023

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 01

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Introduction

This year, there were some excellent and well-crafted responses. Candidates revealed thorough knowledge, good assessment and analysis, and impressive awareness of the links to other papers in Q04.

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

There remain some issues of time-management for candidates and centres to improve. In Q01 candidates should select material from the topic to address the question and not try to cover a 'whole topic' essay in the time and space provided. Many of the candidates who wrote more than the time and space allowed, ran out of time on other questions; this could improve with continued centre-based practice.

Candidates wrote well, overall, in questions that require the AO2 skills of 'Assess,' 'Analyse' and 'Evaluate' although some candidates simply outlined content rather than offering assessment or weighing up of differing positions, therefore they were unable to gain high marks. For centres, this is an area on which to continue to focus, enabling candidates to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

There were some excellent responses to the anthology extract in Q03(a). Candidates were able to 'Clarify' well for the most part, although the tendency to 'translate' or repeat the passage is still evident for some candidates. The extract should be seen as an opportunity to expand upon ideas raised and set them in context of the wider topic, whilst not drifting too far from the text itself. Candidates 'refer to the passage' most effectively when it is in short bursts rather than long lengthy quotations, which then only repeat the content.

The synoptic link element of Q04 was handled well by many candidates, although unfortunately, it still did not appear in a significant number of answers – thus self-penalising and limiting the levels of the mark scheme available to some candidates. This link was most effectively engaged with when clearly sign-posted and then developed in a short paragraph or two on how the topics linked to each other. Some responses created this link throughout their answers, with some significant skill.

Question 1

There were some excellent full, yet concise, responses to this question with detailed knowledge and understanding of the role of analogy as a tool in comparing the world/universe with order found in Paley's watch analogy or Aquinas' arrow analogy or aspects of order in the human body, such as the eye, and order in the world etc. Strong responses also used technical terms in relation to the question with confidence.

Weak answers offered a simple description of examples of analogy in the Design argument such as the archer and the arrow or Paley's watch on the heath; there was little recognition of the role of analogy as a tool. Some candidates tended to list some of Hume's objections.

1 Explore the idea of analogy in the Design Argument.

(8)

The Design Argument is an argument for the existence of God proposed most famously by William Paley. Paley uses analogy in his argument to clarify his ideas on purpose, regularity and complexity as foundations for the existence of God. Paley uses the analogy of a watch, highlighting that through a posteriori knowledge and an inductive assessment we understand that watches have regularity and complexity within their parts and they all work towards one function, their purpose. Similarly, Paley points out highlights that our natural world has ~~po~~ regularity, in its seasons, has complexity, in its biological beings and components of the natural world such as the eye; and we understand that this ~~g~~ complexity and regularity must have a purpose. Just like a watch. Paley uses the similarities between the watch and the natural world to highlight God's existence as a watch has a designer and a creator, we know this a posteriori. Therefore, if a watch, an object possessing similar qualities to our natural world, possesses a designer then so must the world. Whilst the watch analogy focuses on human objects Paley understands that the universe is a much more complex designer, therefore needing a more complex and out of this world designer: that being God. Similarly, Aquinas contributes ^{to} the idea of analogy in his fifth way using an arrow. He explains how an arrow cannot reach / fulfill its purpose without an archer, just how ^{an} ~~an~~ unintelligent being cannot do an intelligent action. Therefore, concluding the need for an intelligent being, God, to design the world and reach its purpose. Thus showing how analogy is used to understand ~~the~~ ^{the world's} need for an intelligent designer, proving the existence of God.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



This is an example of an answer that is awarded full marks.

It is detailed, wide-ranging and focussed entirely on the question.

Total: 8 marks

Level 3



Use scholarship to demonstrate your depth of knowledge.

1 Explore the idea of analogy in the Design Argument.

(8)

Analogy is the comparison of one concept to another, which means that and in the design argument this means comparing the complexity of human artefacts to the complexity of the world. Some theologians use this to argue that one must be designed as the other is too.

The human eye is a common example of complexity in creation that theologians point shows design, as they argue it is not ~~or necessarily~~ possible for nature to have created such complexity on its own.

This ~~idea~~ has similarities to Aquinas' version of the teleological argument, as he pointed that the complexity in nature ~~would not~~ that makes inanimate beings work towards their own 'telos' or purpose shows the work of a designer.



The material offered is good, if a little brief and underdeveloped.

There is some relevant vocabulary and implied scholarship but one feels the candidate might have done more with this knowledge.

Total: 6 marks

Level 3



Note the demands of the question and any key words.

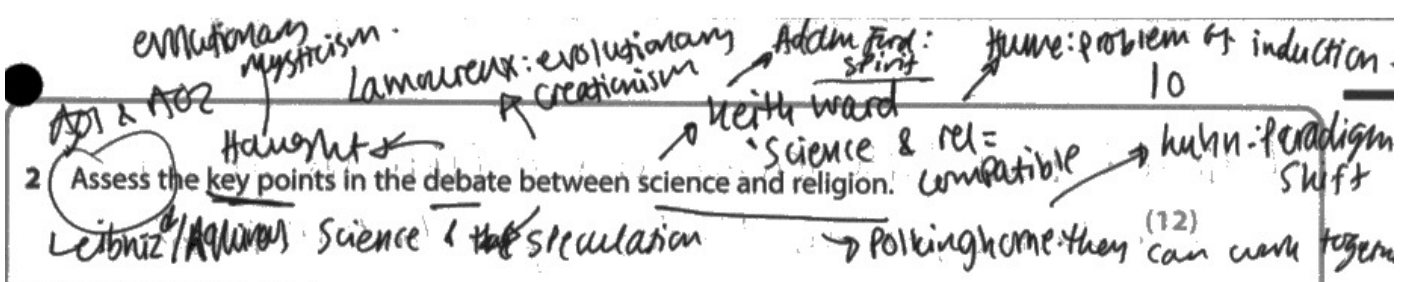
Focus your answer on these.

Question 2

Better candidates were able to demonstrate detailed and accurate knowledge of both scientific and religious ideas. They used these to address the issue of various debates and not simply outline 'contrasting' views.

Clear structure was evident, which enhanced an answer and enabled candidates to keep to a manageable amount, rather than write for a 30-mark question. There was good use of scholarship. Assessment and verdicts were evident, with justified reasoning.

Weaker responses gave brief outlines of a scientific view eg Big Bang opposing a description of the Genesis story of creation, with little or no reference to the 'debate' element of the question. Some candidates offered a view with little or no reasoning evident and thus limiting the 'assess' nature of the question.



There has been an ongoing debate between Science and Religion, particularly surrounding to which one ~~has~~ has more influence and which should take superiority. The caricatures of Science have often been that it is based on reason, rationality and ~~emotional~~ veridical research, whereas religion has often been associated with speculation, myth and fiction, with little evidence to support their claims. Nevertheless, this essay will show that Science and religion are not that different and can be compatible if they both use different methodologies.

Some philosophers have argued that religion should take priority, as it is able to provide answers to people's most prominent existential questions. For example, Leibniz asks the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" and Aquinas' argument from contingency suggests that there ~~cannot~~ cannot be an infinite regress of causation as ontological beings require a reason for their existence. Nevertheless, naturalist Dawkins argues that religion is based on no empirical evidence and as suggests, in his book "The God delusion" that ~~religion~~ theists use whatever will ~~be~~ propose anything to suggest God exists. Nevertheless, Hume - a rationalist and sceptic -

believed that both science and religion are on the same pedestal, as his 'theory of induction' implies that there is no good reason to believe anything, and that all claims should be doubted.

Russell and logical positivists such as Wittgenstein and Ayer propose the superiority of science over religion, in its ability to propose empirical data. ~~and as it is logical~~ Ayer's verification principle suggests that religious statements are meaningless as they are metaphysical utterances. In his view, meaningful statements are ~~only~~ synthetic (empirically verifiable), tautological and analytic. Therefore, he would argue that religion provides no merit. Nevertheless, some have noted the way in which science, itself, is based on speculative ideas. For example, the atomic model is a hypothesis, ~~and~~ quantum physics ~~has not been proven~~ and "dark energy" have not been proven. Additionally, Kuhn believes that science is socially constructed and, ~~is~~ essentially, corrupted by money - as investors get the research they want. This can be seen in the mass research and development of nuclear weapons, whilst the discovery of ^a cure for cancer still remains.

Keith Ward argues that whilst religion and science use different methodologies, ultimately they both attempt to understand the same reality.

For example, whilst science uses mostly hypothesis, testing, and observation to derive answers, religion uses revelation, experience and scripture to understand reality. Nevertheless, both essentially seek ~~to~~ the same truth. It has also been proposed, for example by Polkinghorne, that whilst science attempts to explain the how, religion explains the why. This argument may have some credit - for example the way in which religious scripture often attributes ^{to} the way in which God has provided purpose and meaning to the world through creating humans. Other sceptics have attempted to reconcile science and religion together in their explanations. For example, Lamoureaux's "evolutionary creationism" suggests that God used the process of evolution to create the world ~~and that~~ Adam Ford would support this, as he claimed that God's 'spirit' can be seen within natural processes. ~~And that~~ ^{ultimately} ~~therefore~~, these arguments have attempted to provide a compromise between science and religion that ~~means~~ suggests they can work together.

To conclude, one could argue that science and religion are compatible, if one understands the context in which both arise, and that essentially they both use different methodologies. (Total for Question 2 = 12 marks)



This is an excellent example of a script earning full marks in this question.

It has an excellent introduction, good content and it uses scholarship well.

It is clearly structured and covers a wide range of material, assessing it carefully.

Total: 12 marks

Level 3



Structure your answer clearly, for maximum impact.

2 Assess the key points in the debate between science and religion.

(12)

Science and religion take different approaches to religion. Science uses hypothesis and investigations to determine the cause of the universe. For example the big bang theory suggests the concentration spread quickly in an explosion. There is also another argument known as steady state theory where concentration of mass spreads over time. This theory has been widely rejected due to lack of empirical evidence.

In contrast, Christians argue the world was created by God in six days. There are many Christian approaches to interpreting creation, such as fundamentalism, this is when Bible passages such as Genesis are taken literally. However, more liberal Christians take the view that the Bible should be used only as a guide and is symbolic of God's omnipotence. Scientists such as Darwin disagree with this view due to evidence of evolution.

Darwin states we evolved from apes which would prove the creation story wrong as there would be no Adam and Eve. However, this theory cannot be falsified as there is no way to disprove it. Scientific Materialist, Richard Dawkins states that although we are only bundles of genes which he refers to as 'survival mechanisms', science can still be compatible with nature. For example, natural selection could be God's way of fine tuning his creation.

In addition, Paley argues through intelligent design, which contains the information needed to falsify Darwin's theory. He used an analogy of a mouse trap to show it needs all the pieces need to work in order for the trap as a whole to work, much like the world. Many argue although it may not function as a mouse trap, it may function as something else, like a tie clip. This theory has been criticised as it appears to insert God

as an explanation into gaps in scientific knowledge. This is known as God of the Gaps.

Science uses empirical evidence (knowledge from our surroundings) to explain things. In this way, religion can seem to complement science as many arguments for the existence of God are based on a posteriori (environmental) knowledge, such as the design and cosmological argument. However, much of religion relies on faith and belief in a God, rather than an observation of one.



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This script reaches the top of Level 2.

It has a range of material but needs development and it is a little simplistic in its presentation of the various views offered.

It needs more direct reasoning and judgement, to reach into Level 3.

Total: 8 marks

Level 2



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

'Assess' clearly in your answer and offer a clear conclusion.

Question 3

Q03(a)

Good candidates correctly understood elements of the passage and avoided simply repeating it. Rather, they used it to explain core ideas and often linked it to wider scholarship on the nature of free will such as Plantinga, Augustine etc. This further illustrated the clarifications they offered.

Weak answers generally either repeated or paraphrased the extract; some only gave an account of the inconsistent triad.

Q03(b)

Good candidates presented clear understanding of the problem of evil and gave good balance to addressing both types – moral and non-moral. Many candidates made good use of theodicies in their analysis: there was evidence of appropriate use of scholarship in relation to the issue, notably from Mackie, Epicurus, Augustine, Irenaeus, Draper, Rowe, Hume and Swinburne etc.

Weaker answers focussed on the general problem of evil and suffering, giving descriptive accounts, rather than, as the question demanded, whether moral or non-moral evil was greater. Some others repeated much of the material they used in Q03(a).

SECTION B

- 1) Augustinian / God separate.
- 2) Free will / free will necessary
- 3) addresses solution that evil necessary for good.

adequate solution.

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

Read the following passage before answering the questions.

Perhaps the most important proposed solution of the problem of evil is that evil is not to be ascribed to God at all, but to the independent actions of human beings, supposed to have been endowed by God with freedom of the will. This solution may be combined with the preceding one: first order evil (e.g., pain) may be justified as a logically necessary component in second order good (e.g., sympathy) while second order evil (e.g., cruelty) is not justified, but is so ascribed to human beings that God cannot be held responsible for it... The free will solution also involves the preceding solution at a higher level. To explain why a wholly good God gave men free will although it would lead to some important evils, it must be argued that it is better on the whole that men should act freely, and sometimes err, than that they should be innocent automata, acting rightly in a wholly determined way.

ironic distance

Augustinian

10:00

(Source: Extract from *Evil and Omnipotence*, Mackie, J.L., in *The Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Mitchell, B., Oxford, OUP, 1977, Edexcel Anthology)

3 (a) Clarify the ideas about free will in the extract.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

~~One of~~ The extract is an essay by J. Mackie, who demonstrates how solutions to the problem of evil are 'half-hearted', and fail to solve the problem of the inconsistent triad.

One key idea about free will, is that it means God is independent from evil. The extract says that: 'the problem of evil is that evil is not to be ascribed to God at all, but to the independent actions of human beings'. Indeed, this is the view that the Augustinian theology takes, believing that evil came about through humans misusing their free will, whilst God

remains wholly good. Moreover, this theodicy distinguishes between 'natural' and 'moral' evil, and how we misused free will, both at 'the fall' of creation (natural) and day-to-day (moral). This demonstrates how free will, 'endowed by God', is the principle cause of evil. However, Mackie and Schliermacher criticize this, suggesting it's a logical contradiction to say a perfectly created world went wrong. Ultimately, this shows how ~~the~~ Mackie proves the Augustinian theodicy about evil from human free will to be weak.

Another key idea about free will in the extract, is that it was necessary of God to give human free will. The source says that: 'it is better on the whole that men should act freely, and sometimes err'. Indeed, this is addressed by the Itraneous theodicy, in which Hick posits the counterfactual hypothesis: that free will was necessary by God, and that it actually allows humans to develop positive qualities; Hick outlines the idea of 'epistemic distance', and how God doesn't intervene in evil and distances himself to allow for humans to develop positive qualities independently. However, D. Z. Phillips

critiques this, believing God is evil if suffering is part of His 'divine plan'. Mackie further shows this to be weak, as God surely has the omnipotence to create humans with free will where evil isn't the consequence, showing the free will idea to be unconvincing.

Another key idea, is in Mackie addressing the fallacious solution to the problem of evil that: 'first order evil (e.g., pain) maybe justified as a logically necessary counterpart in second order good (e.g., sympathy). Here Mackie critiques the poor solution that 'evil is a necessary counterpart to good'. For example, he believes that evil and good are two independent concepts, which don't depend on each other for their existence. More, he uses the analogy of 'big things', and how a big thing doesn't require small things to exist for its own existence. This demonstrates how fallacious solutions, including that of free will, fail to solve the problem of evil, which Mackie coherently outlines.

natural evil =
1) can't do anything = the fall
2) original sin / God chooses not to intervene.
(moral evil can be stopped)

moral evil =
1) misuse free will (August.)
2) natural evil sowed by salvation / God detached from evil.

10:35

(b) Analyse the claim that the problem of non-moral (natural) evil is greater than the problem of moral evil.

(20)

The problem of evil is a central philosophical and theological debate, both historically and contemporarily. Natural evils relate to how humans became evil with Adam and Eve at the 'fall' of creation, preventing current human beings from remedying their inherent evil nature. On the contrary, moral evils relate to how humans misuse their free will, as the Augustinian theodicy depicts. Whilst moral evils are significant, ultimately I would argue that the problem of natural evil is more significant.

One reason ^{the problem of} why natural evil is more significant, is because it questions God's interventionist nature. For example, the God of Classical Theism is more generally defined as wholly good, and omnipotent; however, natural evils call into question why God didn't use his omnipotence to intervene and prevent the 'fall' of humanity. More, an example of this, is natural disasters such as earthquakes, and how religion suggests

that this is the result of human error at the fall of creation. This clearly suggests that God isn't omnibenevolent enough to intervene in the evils that human beings have created. This shows the problem of natural evil to be more significant, as it limits the elements of the inconsistent triad, therefore limiting God's nature as wholly good and omnibenevolent.

On the contrary, you could argue that the problem of moral evils is ~~more~~ greater, as it creates a conflict between free will and God's nature. For example, the Augustinian theodicy depicts how 'moral' evils are created from humans misusing their free will, and that God is removed from these evils. Moreover, Franciscan theodicy displays how God created an 'epistemic distance' from himself and his creation, to allow us to exercise our free will and develop positive qualities on our own. However, this contradicts with God's nature as omnibenevolent and omniscient, as he would've predicted that humans would misuse their free will, so

Why would he allow this? This coherently demonstrates how the problem of moral evil is greater than natural, as it calls into question the omnipotence, and interventionist nature of God to a greater extent.

Another reason why you could argue that ~~not~~ the problem of natural evil is greater than moral evil, is because humans can do nothing to create a moral world. For example, the biblical depictions of the fall and natural evils clearly suggest that human nature has been tainted by original sin, and that there is nothing we can do to prevent this. In contrast to moral evils, it could be argued that these are independent of God, and that (as Augustine argues), evil exists only in our world. This shows how natural evils call into question God's wholly good nature, and his abilities to prevent human beings from creating evil. Furthermore, it suggests that God knew of our natural evil, and chose not to intervene, questioning how omnipotent and omnibenevolent he really is.

However, one might instead argue that the ~~most~~ problem of moral evil is greater, as the problem of natural evil has been solved. For example, process theology shows how God isn't perfect, and therefore the world was created imperfectly. More, A. N. Whitehead suggests that God is 'a fellow sufferer who understands', showing how natural evil ~~has~~ has been rectified by God's imperfection and relatability. This shows that natural evil has been solved; on the contrary, the problem of moral evil remains, as it questions why God gave us free will, if He knew, with His omniscience that we would misuse it. Therefore, this convincingly demonstrates how moral evils haven't been sufficiently explained and that the problem still remains.

In conclusion, I agree with the view that ~~at~~ the problem of natural evils is greater than the problem of evils. Whilst moral evils do, indeed, adhere to

the inconsistent triad in relation to the conflict of God's omnibenevolence, ultimately the problem of natural evil both hinders human ability to remove evils, and hinders our understanding of why God, if He is both omnipotent and omnibenevolent, allow the entirety of His creation to be damned.



This answer achieves the top of Level 3 for part (a) and part (b), gaining full marks.

Part (a) illustrates a clear understanding of the idea of free will and offers some solid reasoning and uses technical vocabulary appropriately. It is direct and focussed and uses the text well.

Part (b) demonstrates a wide range of knowledge and specialist language. It deconstructs the issues, leading to clear and coherent reasoning making use of a variety of points including salient material from the theodicies identified.

Part (a): 10 marks

Level 3

Part (b): 20 marks

Level 5

Total: 30 marks

Perhaps the most important proposed solution of the problem of evil is that evil is not to be ascribed to God at all, but to the independent actions of human beings, supposed to have been endowed by God with freedom of the will. This solution may be combined with the preceding one: first order evil (e.g., pain) may be justified as a logically necessary component in second order good (e.g., sympathy) while second order evil (e.g., cruelty) is not justified, but is so ascribed to human beings that God cannot be held responsible for it... The free will solution also involves the preceding solution at a higher level. To explain why a wholly good God gave men free will although it would lead to some important evils, it must be argued that it is better on the whole that men should act freely, and sometimes err, than that they should be innocent automata, acting rightly in a wholly determined way.

(Source: Extract from *Evil and Omnipotence*, Mackie, J.L., in *The Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Mitchell, B., Oxford, OUP, 1977, Edexcel Anthology)

3 (a) Clarify the ideas about free will in the extract.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

This extract outlines Augustine's free will argument, which is that in which the problem of moral human evil, despite there being an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God, we have the capacity to induce evil. ~~Augustine~~^{Mackie} explains that evil is due to the independent actions of human beings - endowed by God with freedom of will. That is to say, God designed humans with the capacity for both good and evil, and the freedom of choice between the two. In this extract, Mackie outlines the concept of first and second order evils and goods. Mackie explains that though some goods can be attained independently of evils, ~~first~~^{second} order goods such as sympathy rely on the existence of first order evils, such as pain. This is to say that God, through his omnipotence and omnibenevolence, instilled within creation the ability to cause and

experience evil in suffering, in order to develop the second order goods.

However, Mackie expands, the second order evils 'are not justified' but are so ascribed to humans that God cannot be held responsible. This is to say that human nature at its core has the potential for evil, and this is beyond God's control due to original sin and Adam and Eve's behaviour within the garden of Eden, as portrayed in Genesis. This belief is upheld by Augustine in the Augustinian reading, explaining the existence of both natural and moral evil due to the original sin of Adam and Eve.

Mackie explains that a 'wholly good God' (such is the depiction of the Abrahamic God) gave humans free will and the potential to sometimes err, on the basis that they would then be enabled to act autonomously, as opposed to automata, and their right actions would be through individual choice in a 'wholly determined way.'

The problem of natural evil, and attempted explanations for it, have some value in as the proportion of suffering and enjoyment are not equally balanced through all people, and thus some experience perhaps joy and minimal suffering and others the contrary. Spinoza agrees that, thus it is to reduce the appearance of evil being structured and equally allocated by God, the natural and free will design of the universe creates for all sorts of suffering, but when an individual chooses to be good they will be rewarded with an eternity in paradise.

The problem of natural evil is significantly less resolved than the problem of evil, as the free will defense and the theodicies suggest adequate explanations for human capacity to choose either good or evil, yet both hastily attempt to group natural evil into the explanation, where it is not evenly accounted for. Natural evil is attempted to be solved through process theology, which claims that God's powers are limited to powers of persuasion, as highlighted by Griffin, and thus he created the world not ex nihilo but from a familiar chaos, therefore he cannot be at fault for the natural evil, as he suffers alongside us, as proposed by Whitehead, and possesses supreme omnibenevolence yet not omnipotence. Process theology adequately solves the problem of natural evil, though it requires the religious believer to accept the possibility that God lacks omnipotence, which many consider an unsatisfactory argument as it strays from the traditional Abrahamic belief of God and implies God

lacks upshot power.

If, seems that conclusively, there are greater means of explanation, towards moral evil than there are of natural evil, suggesting it to be a greater problem than the problem of moral evil.

PLAN - DO NOT MARK:

critiques of religious belief

Atheism - have sense of atheism

Agnosticism - open to any ideas

Dawkins - Religion is child abuse (Ethics)

Darwin - collective truth - societal order

Logical positivists, *Verifiability principle*
A J Ayer

Via negativa - meaningful language

Hans Reichenbach - subjective truth
coherence theory of truth

Don't question authority, terrorism, blind faith.

Freud - unconscious desire for parental figure



This response reaches Level 3 for part (a) and Level 4 for part (b).

Part (a) uses the text and expands upon some of the salient features.

It could be developed further but it covers a range of ideas.

Part (b) remains focussed on the issues of moral evil and non-moral evil. It deconstructs religious issues and makes reasoned judgements considering a more appropriate understanding of the role of theodicies.

This response could also be developed further in terms of detail to reach the next level, but it is a clear and secure answer.

Part (a): 7 marks

Part (b): 16 marks

Total: 23 marks



Explain the terms clearly when needed, to demonstrate your understanding.

Question 4

Strong candidates were able to offer detailed engagement with a range of critiques of religious belief, such as the sociological, psychological, modern or moral critiques. Marx was a particularly popular approach, along with those of Westphal, Freud, Durkheim and Dawkins. Overall, answers were focussed, precise, and detailed and developed well, with 'evaluation' of their decisiveness, or not, as the case may be.

Weaker candidates described one or more of the critiques briefly and lacked evaluation. Some offered the problem of evil as a critique and, whilst deserving credit, these answers generally lacked the depth of engagement expected.

A clear structure to the longer essays is very useful.

It helps to sign-post your link section to the examiner, so that it is clear what other component, that you have studied, you are linking to this topic.

4 Evaluate the claim that critiques of religious belief provide decisive challenges to religion.

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

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

(30)

Religion, and its value, has been ~~heavily~~ heavily debated throughout time, with a greater focus on rationalism supporting the deistic movement. Many people advocate for the significance and need for religion, including Ward, whilst others attempt to explain the corruption of their beliefs, and a need to reject them.

Firstly, Marx presents a sociological critique of religion, stating it is merely a tool of power, to control the poorest in society. Religion was once used, and potentially still used, to prevent the working-class (proletarians) from revolting, feeding them with ideas that they are in the best position. The Bible states that "the meek will inherit the earth", which was used to

control society, and reassure them of their rewards. Marx further criticised religion, and referred to it as the "opium of the people," a drug that ~~subdues the~~ calms them and deludes their views. ~~Marx~~ Marx argued that religion is a social construct that instills power into the rich and ultimately leads to abuse. For example, the monarchy were assumed to be divine representatives ~~on~~ on earth, meaning the people owed their obedience. Marx, therefore, provides a decisive challenge to religion and beliefs, showing that its purpose is to maintain a division within society, and that it must be rejected. ~~Marx~~ This is an accurate account, as in modern - times, religion is decreasing in importance, ~~and~~ ^{as} people ~~prefer~~ often do not agree with the premises, and historical context.

Furthermore, Freud also provided a criticism against religion, following a psychological basis. Freud argued that religion is an illusion, created

by humans to ~~express~~ aid their desires and fears — religion is wish fulfilment. Freud explained the concept of religion through understanding the beliefs as comforts. For example, a belief in God is simply the longing of a strong, protective father figure, and the idea of an after life relaxes our contemplation of death. Freud shows that humans have actually created God, in our image, ~~and that~~ which is comparable to the idea that if a triangle had a God, it too would have three sides.

However, whilst Freud does present a great, logical criticism against religion, some would argue ~~to~~ ^{that} his arguments do not actually disprove God. Firstly, it would make sense that if God did exist, He would fulfil all our desires, ~~and perfectly~~ and be perfect in our image. The idea that religious beliefs seem too 'convenient', in what humans ultimately want is futile, as if God ~~was~~ ^{is} the perfect being, He would fulfil just

mat. Furthermore, Freud's ~~idea~~ idea that 'God' is just desire for a good father, does not work for people who already have a stable family life and do not seek this aspect. Therefore, Freud does present a coherent criticism against religion, however, it ultimately does not disprove God.

Finally, another ~~key~~ key critic of religion, comes from Richard Dawkins, a famous atheist who wrote 'The God Delusion'. Dawkins criticises religion from numerous angles, ~~but~~ highlighting, overall, that it is futile and brings around immorality. ~~By~~ Dawkins attacks religion on the basis it is extremely corrupt and promotes violence. For example, the 9/11 terrorist attack was religiously motivated, alongside the immense amount of wars that have been started over religion (e.g. The Northern Irish Troubles). Furthermore, Dawkins states that religion promotes intolerance, rejecting many people who are 'different'.

For example, Evangelical Christians are well-known for their disgusting views on homosexuality and conversion therapy. Dawkins argues, ~~from~~^{on} this basis, that religion is ~~hopeless~~ awful, and the world would be happier without.

Dawkins further criticises religion's incompatibility with science, and explains how everything can be explained through evolution and genes. Dawkins presented the notion of 'memes', which are beliefs and information that are culturally inherited, and explained how religion is merely the result of generations passing down their 'stories'. Dawkins provides so many great, decisive criticisms against religion, showing that modern-day society no longer calls for a default explanation (God), and instead should focus on scientific ~~explanation~~ development.

However, many challenge Dawkins' brutal, anti-theistic criticisms, on the

bases he completely strips humanity of culture and meaning. If we are merely the accumulation of genes and evolution human life is pointless and not worth living. Dawkins would respond that just because people may not like the reality, it does not mean ~~its~~ it ~~is~~ is not true.

Furthermore, Dawkins is criticised for using too extreme examples and not accurately representing believers. Ward advocates for the fact that religion inspires goodness and morality, and only an extreme minority use religion ~~with~~ to cause suffering. Ward shows how religion promotes charity (e.g. Christian Aid), and has helped cease racism, through supporting the abolishment of slavery and the race relations act.

Religion provides a comfort to many, and regardless of its falsity, it motivates people to be better and have hope for the future. Furthermore, religion remains strong against

criticisms, as a majority of believers take a liberal approach, accepting scientific developments and understanding how elements are not absolute in the Bible. Even the Catholic Church accepts the theory of evolution, and has done since the 1950s.

Through my studies of Buddhism, it is clear that criticisms against religion are undermined by the actual core and meaning behind the beliefs. Buddhism has been criticised for being androcentric and supporting mystical claims, yet these ideas are only 'face-value'. Religious believers ~~view~~ often view these ideas of the husk (in line with Westphal's analogy), that can be rejected, whilst the kernel can be held and maintained. For Buddhists, regardless of criticisms, it does not undermine their core belief at the heart of their religion, that enlightenment is the only way to cease suffering. Buddhist often gladly reject mystical aspects of the Pali Canon and views on ~~mysoygyne~~ misogyny, and

instead focus on their true beliefs.

In conclusion, critiques of religion provide extremely decisive and compelling arguments. Marx and Dawkins are correct in showing the corruption of religion, and Freud's psychological argument is logical. However, these criticisms often focus on ~~extreme~~ less important factors, that do not ultimately determine beliefs, allowing believers to maintain their core views, in a personal way (the kernel).



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This essay is a fine example of a script that was awarded full marks.

It includes a wide range of knowledge and specialist language and terminology is selected and used well throughout.

It makes careful coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements of the question and regularly considers the question.

It is focussed throughout and provides convincing conclusions that are justified by the candidate.

The link to Buddhism is handled well and is related to the question carefully.

Total: 30 marks

Level 5

4 Evaluate the claim that critiques of religious belief provide decisive challenges to religion.

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

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

(30)

Religious belief is simply an individualised opinion on personal beliefs. There are many beliefs that can be understood but the main one is the existence of God. As we begin to delve into the 21st Century, our ideas and views change about religion and Christians interpret the bible less literally. To begin with, God's traditional characteristics such as his omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence, are the key to the majority of debates. As mentioned previously the problem of evil really questions these characteristics.

Some Christians claim to experience religious 'lightings' or ~~see~~ feelings of God's presence, and put it down as a religious experience. They experience them either passively, unceasingly and they give

Christians new profound knowledge,
only knowledge creicued by the experience.
As a Christian these sightings must be
extreamly Comjating and enlightening.
However as cathiest if we dont tend to
believe an undudual when they say
they have. Swinburne says that the
idea of credulity means we should
believe peoples experiances and why
would they lie about that.

John Hick said the difference between
athiests and Christians is simply down
to different kinds of interpretation. He
said that if we as athiest see a light
at the end of our bed, we think it's
a torch, however Christian will think
that it's ~~the~~ God's presence and a
Sign. The problem and question these
put on the religious belie of God, is that
it cannot be verified nor falsified
because it's non Cognitive calls because
there's no evidence and more of the
time no witnesses. This is a Critique to
religious belie because that everyone will
tell the truth and for things like

media coverage and money, some people will do anything for. So we cannot base our opinion on someone else's experience.

Richard Dawkins goes against any form of religious belief, as he says "religion is child abuse". In his book "The God Delusion", he writes about every single form of criticism regarding religious belief and often calls anyone who believes in religion "delusional".

Dawkins also talks about the fact that drugs and alcohol can be heavily influenced by these religious experiences and anyone can be enticed to lie about it. He also said that anyone can have lucid dreams and see lucid things in their dreams. This really is a little bit of a religious experience, and implies that religious belief has many challenges.

The problem of evil and suffering certainly does not correlate with God's power and agape (unconditional love) for everything and everyone. As an atheist, maybe it's a biased view but

How can God have so much power and not do anything about it. It also must be extremely difficult for him to see this creation cause natural disasters. Christians will justify it by saying this life is a test, but how far does the test have to go? Watching innocent lives disappear because God's creation of the world has failed us?

To conclude there are many challenges that challenge religious belief, whether or not Christians choose to believe in another story. However, there is only so much justifying to do until you begin to question the true nature of God, and if he is really what the bible perceives him as.



This is a good, solid response, covering a range of ideas.

It has coherent chains of reasoning and appraises the evidence but this is an area that could be developed or 'sharpened up' to push it higher up the mark scheme.

The synoptic link is not evident.

Total: 23 marks

Level 4



Maintain your focus on the question.

Apply your knowledge to the question, with clear comment throughout.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates should:

- Select material carefully to answer the question set: for an 8-mark question, do not use everything you would use for a larger question; focus your work to the marks and space available
- Remember to make your analytical comment clear. Offer an assessment of, or verdict on, a position rather than simply present an alternative view eg 'however others argue' without judgement
- Read the question carefully and refer to it at times to maintain focus in your answer
- Ensure scholars' names are used with correct spellings and views attributed to them
- For Q04 make the synoptic link clear. It is useful (although not the only way to achieve this) to indicate the topic you are linking to, by naming it directly for example 'This links to the Study of a Religion paper topic of Sources of Authority where ... because...' Candidates do not need to be this explicit, but it is one way to sign-post that the requirements for a Level 5 response have been attempted

Grade boundaries

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

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

