

Examiners' Report

June 2025

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 01

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Introduction

It was a pleasure to see such strong teaching and examination skills demonstrated in this series. There were many excellent examples of candidates remaining fully focussed on the questions and drawing on a wide range of scholars and philosophical reasoning.

Notably, there was a clear effort to engage with the structure of arguments and to incorporate relevant philosophical terminology. In the majority of cases, candidates answered all questions and allocated their time methodically across the paper.

In Q01, whilst there were some exemplary responses that displayed confident and advanced understanding of process theology, a number of candidates left this question unanswered. Although it remains the least popular theodicy, it still requires clear distinction from classical theodicies.

The specific wording of Q02 was occasionally overlooked, with some candidates responding to a generic 'assess the Kalam Cosmological Argument' task, rather than addressing the precise focus of the question.

Some appeared unsure of the specific features of the Kalam argument and instead assessed the strengths of cosmological arguments more generally. Where such responses were linked to the notion of causation, marks were awarded appropriately. There was also some confusion evident between the concepts of causation and contingency.

For Q03, candidates either knew the passage or they did not. Those who were familiar with the extract were able fully to explore the concept of *bliks* and place this within the wider context of religious language. However, there was some confusion between the views of Flew, Mitchell, and Hare.

It appears that some candidates were expecting a question on the Cosmological or Teleological arguments for Q04, or a question that covered the full range of arguments for the existence of God. As a result, some candidates found it difficult to draw upon a sufficiently broad range of scholarship to construct a full and balanced essay.

At the highest level, candidates presented responses that demonstrated a wide range of detailed and carefully applied knowledge, allowing them to deconstruct the issues and provide clear, sustained reasoning and well-supported judgements. This was achieved through thoughtful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of differing viewpoints, and the formation of clear, evaluative conclusions.

It remains essential that candidates are familiar with the demands of the Assessment Objectives (AOs) and the weighting of each question. Some approached all questions in the same way, which in some cases affected the marks awarded. A clear understanding of the different question types, the key command words, and the corresponding mark allocations is crucial for candidates aiming to maximise their performance.

Question 1

Whilst there were some excellent responses in which candidates demonstrated a detailed understanding of process theology, a number of candidates appeared underprepared for this question. This may be due to its limited coverage in textbooks, because it is not typically regarded as a central theodicy.

Candidates who achieved full marks remained focussed on the scope of the question, either briefly illustrating several points or exploring a few points in depth. Some responses were particularly well-developed, including discussion of God's bipolar nature, where his physical body is present on Earth and his spiritual aspect being metaphysical.

Some candidates devoted too much time to outlining the problem of evil, which was not required for this question. Others approached it as an 'assess' question, rather than focussing on the key instruction to 'explore'; however credit was given for AO1, where applicable.

There was also noticeable confusion, with elements of Augustine, Irenaeus and Hick being applied incorrectly in an attempt to address the question. It may be that candidates are more familiar with these scholars, given their prominence as more-commonly studied theodicies.

SECTION A

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

1 Explore key ideas about Process theodicy.

(8)

One key idea about Process theodicy is that there is a limit to God's omnipotence. This refers to the idea that God did not really create the world, but can only develop what is already there.

Another key idea about Process theodicy is that God suffers the same way as humans. This is because God is a part of the universe, and therefore suffers from evil and suffering the same way humanity does.

A third key idea about Process theodicy is that God develops with the universe. This means that, as a part of the universe, God also evolves and develops through time.

A final key idea about Process theodicy is that God develops is bipolar. This refers to the theory that God as a being is made up of two "poles", the material, physical pole and the spiritual pole.



An example of a candidate that achieved full marks, using a clear and succinct writing style to highlight several key ideas.

Level 3

Total: 8 marks



You do not need to have an introduction nor conclusion for 'explore' questions.

SECTION A

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

- 1 Explore key ideas about Process ^{whitehead} theodicy.

(8)

Process theodicy was created by ~~arrest~~ whitehead, a religious philosopher in response to the problem of evil. Whitehead argues that God gave us complete free will ~~poss~~ and that is why evil exists, as how could we have complete free will if we could only make good decisions. Whitehead believes that God is not omnipotent but he ~~isn't~~ did create the world, but after creating the world, whitehead takes a dualistic approach, and says that God doesn't interfere with what happens in the world after he created it. Like setting a watch and letting it tick. Whitehead still believes in a personal and loving God and that's why he argues that God is a co-sufferer, meaning he suffers with us. ~~He~~ Whitehead explains that he does this ~~because~~ because he ~~isn't~~ doesn't exist in a realm outside ours, instead whitehead believes that God exists in everything around us. Whitehead's theodicy ~~shows for~~ solves the evidential problem of evil as he reduces God's characteristics while still allowing for God to be all loving and for people to have a personal relationship with Him as they know that when they are suffering he is also suffering alongside them, giving a deeper and comforting relationship with God.



An example of a full marks answer that takes a few points and develops them fully.

Level 3

Total: 8 marks



Use the relevant scholars to show depth of knowledge in your answers.

Question 2

This question was generally well received by candidates and provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate nuanced knowledge of the Kalam Cosmological Argument.

Some candidates argued that it was more compelling than Aquinas' version, because it focusses on 'things that begin to exist' rather than the broader notion of causation, thereby avoiding some of the criticisms levelled at Aquinas' argument. Whilst there were occasional inaccuracies in the historical understanding of both Kalam and Aquinas, these did not significantly affect the marks awarded.

There was some excellent use of scientific theories, including references to the oscillating universe and the steady-state theory. Candidates who achieved higher marks focussed on evaluating the strengths of the argument, rather than merely assessing it in general terms.

Some candidates listed strengths without assessing them fully, which limited the marks they could attain. It was encouraging to see many candidates applying philosophical terminology relating to argument formation and knowledge acquisition, such as deductive reasoning and *a posteriori* knowledge. Usually, these terms were used correctly and linked appropriately to relevant parts of the argument, although in some cases they were used without adequate explanation.

Weaker responses tended to drift into a general comparison of the three classical arguments for the existence of God.

Hume Problem of induction ^{with unjustified assumption} Kant - phenomenal + noumenal

2 Assess the strengths of the Kalam Cosmological Argument for the existence of God.

(12)

The Kalam Cosmological argument argues that everything that begins to exist has a cause and because the world began to exist it must therefore have a cause and that cause is God. A strength of the Kalam cosmological argument for the existence of God over other cosmological arguments is that it doesn't fall to the criticism of if everything has a cause so what causes God. By having the first premise be everything that begins to exist, the argument can state that God did not begin to exist because ~~he is~~ He is transcendent / outside of time so He rightly does not have a cause. However the ~~disting~~ distinction between God's transcendence and immanence ~~com~~ and humans / the world's finiteness and ~~he~~ is a criticism of the argument. Kant explained that there is the phenomenal which humans reside in and the noumenal that God resides in. These two are completely separate, Kant argues any observations from the phenomenal can not be applied to God so noticing everything in the phenomenal has a cause has no applications as an argument for God's existence because He is completely outside of such ~~a~~ existence.

Another strength of the argument as an existence for God is it is ~~based on~~ a posteriori based on experience and observation. We can observe that things need a cause and

see that infinite regress is impossible (infinite regress being the continued tracking of causes backwards indefinitely). This is a strength for the argument because it doesn't rely on scripture and revealed theology. However this is also a weakness, the argument assumes the conclusion the first cause is God. This is an inductive leap to assume the cause is God from the ~~fact~~ idea of there being a first cause is not supported. Ockham's razor states the simplest answer is ~~off~~ the likeliest. An all powerful, all loving God is not the simplest explanation. This weakens the argument because it is just as ^{easy} ~~easy~~ if not more appropriate to assume the first cause be ~~or~~ a being that ~~then~~ is much simpler, less powerful, less involved. It may be that someone could conclude multiple chains of causes and therefore multiple Gods. The argument has no defense against such conclusions being drawn.

Hume's problem of inductive reasoning also applies to ~~Hume also comments on the~~ how the argument is set out. The Kalam Cosmological argument assumes that just because we observe something that means that it has always been and how it will continue to be. This is in no way justified and weakens the argument considerably.

Finally, the Kalam argument is strong as it is compatible with scientific evidence, ~~it~~ is generally accepted the

world did begin observed through the Big Bang it makes sense that the cause of the Big Bang was God so in this sense science and religion is compatible. ~~This is also supported by the Bible, the first w~~ However this is not a universally accepted fact, many still disagree, the oscillating universe theory proposes that the world continuously shrinks and grows. This means that the world did not begin to exist and therefore the kalam's argument's first premise is untrue and cannot be accepted.



The candidate begins by giving a clear and precise outline of the Kalam Cosmological Argument.

They move swiftly on to the idea that one of the Kalam's strengths is that it does not require a causer of God, unlike other Cosmological arguments.

The candidate then goes on to explore the *a posteriori* nature of the argument and assesses this idea against infinite regression and scripture.

Finally, the candidate gives a slightly developed strength that the argument fits in with science.

Level 3

Total: 12 marks



Focus on the precise wording of the question: weaknesses were not needed for this particular question.

2 Assess the strengths of the Kalam Cosmological Argument for the existence of God.

(12)

The strengths of the Kalam cosmological argument are as follows. Kalam's cosmological argument is a deductive argument which successfully proves the existence of God as it argues the portrays the chain of causes and events of the universe. It follows, 'Whatever began to exist has a cause, the universe exists, so the cause of the universe must be God, therefore God exists.

This is a strength of the argument as it's clear and logical in it's reasoning. However many philosophers have criticised the Kalam argument as being too simplistic as it argues from 'whatever begins to exist' to the general 'the universe'.

Furthermore, additional strength of the argument is that the Kalam argument rejects the idea of an infinite regress as it's seen as not logical. This is evident in the fact, that in order to prove the existence of God, there can't be infinite causes because this would lead to there being no cause of the universe itself.

So there has to be a cause, that started the chain of causes, which itself was uncaused, which proves the existence of God. However, one can critique this argument as the universe could have an infinite regress of causes and could itself be caused. There are no criticisms to counterattack this claim as Hume suggests that our experience of the universe is limited, so we can't talk meaningfully about it, as there is no sufficient evidence that the universe was caused by God. This critique challenges the notion that God exists.

In conclusion, one has assessed the strengths of the kalam cosmological argument for the existence of God and one has analysed the strengths by providing critiques that challenge the notion of the existence of a God.



This candidate begins by giving an outline of the argument, which is correct, and follows logical linking. The Kalam, being a strong argument because it is deductive, has been stated but not explored.

However, the further strength that it avoids infinite regress is developed and assessed, leading to a simplistic chain of reasoning.

Level 2

Total: 7 marks



When including key terminology make sure you have shown your understanding of the term, rather than just stating it.

Question 3

Q03(a)

There were some excellent responses that engaged fully with the text and showed a detailed knowledge of blik and how they relate to religious language in general, and the falsification principle in particular. Some candidates showed knowledge of the full extract by referencing Hare's example of driving and our perception of safety being dependent on our blik.

Lower-achieving candidates simply illustrated parables in the falsification symposium, without focussing on the meaning behind these parables and how they related to religious language.

Candidates that were not able to progress up the levels of response normally did not tie in the notion of blik to religious language, or show a clear understanding of blik.

Q03(b)

This question was approached rigorously by some candidates. They engaged fully with all aspects of the prompt, including the idea of religious language being 'understood correctly'.

Candidates who argued that religious language can be understood correctly, while drawing on the work of Wittgenstein, Tillich, and Aquinas, and then developed their arguments from those foundations, were able to access the higher levels of response.

There were also excellent responses incorporating Brümmer's view that religious language is meaningful due to its personal and communal significance.

Some candidates referenced Wittgenstein's picture theory, although few were able to explain or evaluate it effectively.

Knowledge of language games was generally clearer, although there were few references to the idea that language derives its meaning from use. In several cases, the theory was oversimplified as merely suggesting that religious language is "like a game".

Lower-scoring responses tended to lack secure knowledge of the relevant theories, or repurposed generic answers to the question of whether religious language is meaningful.

In some instances, candidates demonstrated a stronger understanding of the scholars' historical contexts than of the actual theories being assessed.

SECTION B

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

Read the following passage before answering the questions.

Let us call that in which we differ from this lunatic, our respective *bliks*. He [Flew] has an insane *blik* about dons; we have a sane one. It is important to realize that we have a sane one, not no *blik* at all; for there must be two sides to any argument – if he has a wrong *blik*, then those who are right about dons must have a right one. Flew has shown that a *blik* does not consist in an assertion or system of them; but nevertheless it is very important to have the right *blik*.

It was Hume who taught us that our whole commerce with the world depends upon our *blik* about the world; and that differences between *bliks* about the world cannot be settled by observation of what happens in the world. That was why, having performed the interesting experiment of doubting the ordinary man's *blik* about the world, and showing that no proof could be given to make us adopt one *blik* rather than another, he turned to backgammon... It seems, indeed, to be impossible even to formulate as an assertion the normal *blik* about the world... without a *blik* there can be no explanation; for it is by our *bliks* that we decide what is and what is not an explanation.

(Source: extract adapted from *The Philosophy of Religion* edited by Basil Mitchell, Oxford University Press, 1977, Chapter I, Theology and Falsification: A Symposium, Edexcel Anthology)

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about bliks.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

para 1 → (lunatic - what, resp to flew / mitchell)
para 2 → flew
para 3 → our bliks → world view - range / different
4 → Hume

Hare put forward his belief about 'bliks' in the parable of the lunatic in response to flew. flew in his parable of the gardener states that the religious believer allows nothing to counter their religious blik even though it can't be justified. Both Hare and Mitchell repeat this assertion. ~~Hare~~ says Mitchell says religious beliefs

do allow things to count there ~~are~~ beliefs they just have significant articles of faith.

Here in ~~this~~ this passage refers to the "Lunatic" who has "binks", which is the Lunatic's world view that all his professors are trying to kill him. which is his "insane bink about duns" to this person his binks are different to others meaning they have "differences between binks about the world" & then says we have no evidence for binks and they do "not consist in an assertion" meaning they have no true meaning or purpose, but Hore responds saying binks are personal "world views" that you can not be proven true or false but they hold a great deal of value to those who experience it. As demonstrated in the Lunatic, there is "no proof" but it changed the Lunatic's life and behaviour so it must be important and hold deep meaning to the individual.

In the passage it ends with "it is

our beliefs that decide what is" this means in terms of the world it is his beliefs that govern what truly happens even if it is not real and that is important. The passage also says it is "very important to have the right belief". This is because if your worldview is wrong ~~and~~ you can live your whole life paranoid or thinking someone is trying to kill you which is harmful to your mental health.

Overall, Hare puts forward a good point which ultimately represents the idea that religious ~~beliefs~~ ^{believers} may have different interpretations of God but that is ~~allowed~~ allowed as religion has no boundaries or rules it is subjective. Contrast ~~the~~ to people who only think something like a "belief" holds any value if it has empirical evidence like the existence of a god or terrorist. Moreover, Pascal mitchell points that the partisan has such belief in God and trusts God has a greater divine plan for him there doesn't need to be proof and beliefs aren't just not letting counter arguments they are significant articles of faith.

(b) Analyse the view that religious language is meaningful if understood correctly.

(20)

Plan → is meaningful

1. VP have or
2. Wittgenstein, 7 links

could be 1-10 - the
AP 2-11/12
L meta

Religious language can definitely be meaningful if understood correctly as the verification and falsification principle can't always be relevant and it being meaningful is supported by many key thinkers like Wittgenstein, Hume and Hare.

Firstly, the verification principle states that unless things can be proven true according to H.A. Ayer they have no meaning. But the verification principle actually fails itself as not everything can be verified yet still more definitely be true. For example, events in history like WW2 or WW1. Today, in the present there is no one alive to testify that this did happen. So according to this principle it can't have happened. When in reality

it is only logical it happened
due to the sheer weight of physical
evidence in books or journals or photos.

This means that if religious language
can be understood correctly it is meaningless
and principles like Ayer's Verification
principle are used incorrectly and don't
prove anything. anything.

Secondly, Wittgenstein's language
games. He said that if you are part
of the game only then you can understand
the rules. According to Wittgenstein we
are in different pairs of up / language
games and they are pretensions. If we
use the ~~rules~~ rules / words correctly acco-
rding to the criteria of coherence they can
be understood. For example, so to some a
bat is a piece of sport equipment but to
others a bat is a animal. This therefore
supports the claim that if ^{religious} language
is understood correctly it can be
meaningless. So in terms of religious
different ~~names~~ ^{names} of gods could only
be understood in the christian community.
This is the same with picture theory.

Frederick in language games states that faith and religious language is beyond reason or science, further supporting religious language doesn't need to be proven to be meaningful, only if it's understood correctly.

Thirdly, another reason why religious language is meaningful is if it's understood correctly is from Hare and 'bliks'. Bliks ^{are} our own personal worldview that is our meaning and express personal thoughts about the world. Everyone has different bliks and they can't be scientifically tested so many empiricists say they have no meaning but to religious believers and the individual particularly they can be completely life changing and hold great meaning. Therefore this also supports religious language having meaning as long as others can truly understand your blik as they are subjective interpretations.

However, few who deconstructed the falsification principle says religious language can't be meaningful even when understood correctly if it can be proven false. This is in line with a scientific approach as, ~~or not~~ as long as it can't be proven false it would be completely illogical to credit it ~~as~~ as meaningful and break the scientific law of nature.

Although, Hume's belief can be countered as Hume believed that religious language is cognitive but Braithwaite states that actually religious language is non-cognitive, treating it like a scientific statement doesn't make sense as religious language is something very personal. Some one who is struggling perhaps with grief or loss may turn to religion to guide them and help them and use religious language to help make sense of ~~there~~ their issues. Therefore, by critiquing it and saying 'it's meaningless' doesn't make the suffer feel

any belief or supported, treating it like it's a scientific fact is pointless. Moreover, Mitchell discusses significant articles of faith where religious individuals don't give up on their beliefs because someone like you said it was insignificant or meaningless, they hold onto their beliefs regardless if it can't be understood correctly, religious language can't support to.

However, another criticism proposed by Tillich's symbols is that symbols are a form of religious language yet time after time a form of religious language which is the cross is misused and misinterpreted and trivialised for political statements. Similarly, the Swastika was originally a symbol of health and prosperity in Buddhism but got manipulated by the Nazis and now represents hateful ideology. This means symbols which are a type of religious language get used in the wrong way so even if some individuals understand them correctly, it can't be meaningful.

because people like ^{goes} gods continue to misuse and trivialise them for fashion.

Although, some would argue like Hillel himself that symbols open up new levels of reality (metaphysical) that otherwise would be closed.

This means according to Carl Jung that symbols are valuable and even with a changing world ~~the~~ through different cultures and time they stay static and relevant and help individuals have hope. For example religious ~~beliefs~~ believers may place a cross by their bed to encourage them to do good.

This shows how even if they may not always be used correctly, to those who do and understand them correctly they are extremely meaningful and greater than just signs.

In conclusion, I agree that religious language is meaningful if understood correctly as supported by Hare, Hillel and the weak verification principle.

(Total for Question 3 = 30 marks)



The candidate is in control of the material through both sections of the question.

In the first part they stay within the scope of the question and show detailed knowledge on blik, using support from the text.

The second part of the question is well-structured, with key knowledge of religious language being shown and analysed fully. For instance, the treatment of symbols and how they cannot be understood correctly due to misappropriation of religious symbols for fashion.

They then go on to deconstruct the view and draw on Carl Jung and the pragmatic elements of symbols.

Q03(a) Level 3: 10 marks Q03(b) Level 5: 20 marks

Total: 30 marks



Fully engage with the extracts and have clear knowledge of how the text fits into the wider discussion.

Question 4

There were some excellent responses that demonstrated clear engagement with the Ontological Arguments and skilfully incorporated synoptic links from across the course. For example, some candidates noted that Buddhists would reject the definition of God used in the argument, whilst others observed that in Sikhism, belief in God is grounded in spiritual experience, not abstract metaphysical demonstrations.

Further synoptic links included references to the New Testament and Jesus' miracles, Kant's postulates of practical reason in ethics, and the contrast between the Islamic conception of a singular God and the Christian understanding of the Trinity.

Most candidates demonstrated a solid grasp of Anselm and Gaunilo, although the use of Kant and Descartes varied in both accuracy and depth.

Lower-achieving candidates tended to reduce the Ontological Argument to the simplistic assertion that "God must exist because we can think of him." Whilst some made comparisons with other arguments for the existence of God, these were often presented in place of evaluating the Ontological Argument itself.

A common pitfall was the use of the term *a priori* without understanding or explaining its significance within the context of the argument. There was, however, some excellent engagement with the ideas of Russell, Malcolm, and Plantinga, particularly around the concept of God's necessary existence. That said, Anselm's second formulation remains an area where knowledge could be developed further.

SECTION C

Write your answer in the space provided.

- 4 Evaluate the claim that the Ontological Argument is a successful proof for the existence of God.

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.

1:25

(30)

The ontological argument for the existence of god is an a priori, deductive argument. This means that it attempts to illustrate that god must exist through logic and reasoning. This takes the definition of god and works to the conclusion that the predicates must lead to existence.

Scholars such as Anselm of Canterbury carried and developed this argument, however, not without criticisms from notable scholars such as Kant and Comte.

To begin, Anselm defined god in 'prologian' as "that which nothing greater can be conceived"; emphasising how a being that is so perfect, must exist in the mind and reality, as if he only existed in the mind, god isn't the greatest possible being. Thus Anselm sets up the argument based on logic and reasoning alone through the a priori (without reference to experience) premise.

which must then lead to the conclusion that god exists. One strength of this form of argument is that the definition of god is simple to understand, meaning that both atheists and theists can agree on the definition of god, and therefore the conclusion that god exists. However, Kant strongly challenged the reasoning behind the ontological argument. He believed that you can't define something into existence, and this is what he believed that Anselm was doing. He thought that existence wasn't a predicate and simply adding "it exists" to the definition cannot mean anything. Furthermore, if we continue to analyse Kant's perspective of the ontological argument, we can consider the definitions of analytic and synthetic statements. Kant proposed that the analytic statements (the definition of god) only talk about language and don't mean anything in the real world. Synthetic statements however, do tell us about the world. Yet to Kant's definitions, when applied to the ontological argument mean that the ontological argument is attempting to use analytical language to define god into existence. Kant's challenges of the ontological argument clearly define how the logic and reasoning are flawed and challenges the validity of the argument as

Anselm cannot simply define something into existence.
This weakens the ontological argument.

Another critique of the ontological argument was developed by Gaunilo, in 'on behalf of the fool'. He challenged this reasoning in the ontological argument by introducing the idea of a perfect island. This island being so perfect then must exist in reality as its the most perfect. Through using the same line of reasoning as Anselm, he attempts to demonstrate how the argument being deductive is flawed, as the existence of the island doesn't occur simply because he logically reasoned, and then he concludes that god can't exist. Despite this scathing critique, Anselm was flattered by this response and in turn responded with some ~~reclarification~~ clarification. He ~~he~~ argued that because ^{a perfect} any island has multiple different interpretations based on the person, it's not possible that compared to god. He believed that god was a perfect, necessary being. As god possesses ^{essence} ~~being~~ "from itself", god is not a contingent being like an island. This reformulation as forthrightly believes, is focusing on god's necessary existence. This means that despite this challenge by Gaunilo,

Anselm still manages to successfully combat this challenge through focusing on god's existence. This then strengthens ~~the~~ the ontological argument as a proof for existence of god.

However, there are some religious believers who don't necessarily agree with the ontological argument. Within the study of religion at Judaism, there is less of a focus on the definition of god and thus proving he exists, and instead the focus is on the practical application of living a religious life. Jews follow the mitzvot as they ~~believe~~ believe that the religious obligation ~~brings~~ brings them closer to god and this is the Gemilut Chasadim (acts of loving kindness) in contrast to the idea that god exists on faith and the idea of ~~Beit~~ 'imitatio dei' (walking in his ways) are proof for god. This then challenges the idea of the ontological argument being successful, as ~~to~~ some people within religion don't rely on the logic and certainty of the definition of god. Instead god can be positively proven through faith. Kierkegaard said that the belief in god isn't necessarily to be based on evidence and instead people must take a "leap into faith". These instances show that while

the ontological argument may be successful at proving the existence of god, the majority of religious believers do not base their faith in the existence of god due to reasoning.

However, that is not to ignore the strength of the language in the ontological argument. As a deductive reasoning, the conclusion is true if the premises are true; ~~as was~~ This means that this argument, compared to the inductive Design and Cosmological, proves the existence of god rather than simply increasing the probability. Despite this, there are still many critiques of the ~~the~~ reasoning.

Russell argues ~~that statements about god that~~ the ontological argument is a "case of bad grammar" as he secondly Kant's critiques of the reasoning. There are also further criticisms of this argument on the grounds of the conclusion.

There is the possibility that we can think of a god without it existing, which challenges the conclusion. Furthermore, the ontological argument fails to explain ~~are~~ the challenges to the existence of god such as the problem of evil and suffering. Mackay's inconsistent triad, that god's omnipotence and omnibenevolence ~~can~~ are incompatible with the evil in the world is also

a deductive proof for the non-existence of god. This challenges those who accept the premise that god is "that which nothing greater can be conceived" as its logical that a greater being would eliminate the problem of evil. However, Plantinga's idea of maximal greatness challenges this idea. While there may be aspects of the world that are contradictory with the idea of the god of classical theism, he argues that there must be a "maximally great" being. This god may be the most maximally great being as we cannot know what other possibilities there are for the world as we don't possess the knowledge of god. However, this argument for the existence of god is partially successful in its logic and reasoning, yet the practical application challenges the existence of god. This means that the ontological argument may not be able to completely and adequately prove the existence of god.

However, in contrast to other arguments such as the Cosmological which has many ideas such as the Kalām Cosmological that are based on scientific evidence, the ontological remains more successful. Due to the fact that the reasoning isn't based on any scientific ideas, it means that

this argument cannot be altered by scientific developments. This ~~means~~ also means it avoids the problem of induction, the idea that simply because there appears to be universal laws that dictate behaviour, that it may not be true. Inductive arguments only improve the probability rather than proving gods existence, like the ontological argument. This means that the ontological argument is successful at proving gods existence as the logic and reasoning wont be challenged by scientific developments changing over time. This strengthens the argument.

Overall, I would argue that in theory and through the logic and reasoning of the ontological argument, it can definitively prove the existence of god. Anselm adequately explains the idea of god as a necessary being and the deductive proof strengthens the argument unlike other arguments for god (cosmological or design) that are based on inductive reasoning. However, I believe that in practical use, the ontological argument doesn't sufficiently prove gods existence. Occams razor would take the simplest explanation 'devoid of unnecessary entities', god being unnecessary. There are many

more challenges such as the problem of evil which cannot be explained by the existence of the ontological god. This means that the ontological argument is unsuccessful. It doesn't provide the foundation for religious belief, as demonstrated in Judaism and by Kierkegaard. Overall, it may work in theory to explain god, yet there are too many inconsistencies of definitions meaning it perhaps is more useful to reject the ontological argument and take a "leap into faith".



The candidate begins with a confident introduction and moves straight into an analysis of Anselm's definition of God in the Proslogion. They examine whether the statement "God exists" is analytic or synthetic, through the lens of Kant's critique that existence is not a predicate.

They then move on to Gaunilo's 'perfect island' criticism, resolving this with the idea that God possesses the property of aseity, that is, being self-existent.

Each scholar is introduced purposefully; for example, when *a posteriori* arguments for the existence of God are referenced, it is not for detailed exploration, but rather to highlight how the Ontological Argument more effectively avoids the problem of induction.

Level 5

Total: 30 marks



'Evaluate' questions require you to build an argument and make reasoned judgements.

To help make sure you answer the question fully, it can be helpful to think about how you would conclude and which scholars you need to include, before you start writing.

SECTION C

- Gaunilo
- Aquinas
- Russell

Write your answer in the space provided.

- 4 Evaluate the claim that the Ontological Argument is a successful proof for the existence of God.

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

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

(30)

The ontological argument is an a priori, inductive argument that aims to prove the existence of God by using God's definition. This argument includes the works of scholars such as Anselm, Descartes and Plato.

Anselm first supports the ontological argument with the following view: Anselm presumes that God is that nothing greater can be thought of. He also presumes that it is greater to exist in the mind and reality compared to just the mind. However, Anselm assumes that God exists in the mind only and therefore there is something greater than God that can be thought of. Logical contradiction is used here to lead us to the conclusion that there is a being greater being that exists in the mind and reality, this being now known as God. Anselm's views suggest the ontological argument is a successful

proof for the existence of God.

However a criticism of the ontological argument comes from Aquinas. He states that there is no ~~agreed~~ agreed definition of God so the ontological argument is too subjective and therefore invalid. As well as this, Aquinas would argue an a priori argument can never be valid as without any prior experience or observation, the argument can never be verified.

This suggests the ontological argument is an unsuccessful proof of the existence of God and also reduces the significance of Anselm's argument for the ontological argument being a successful proof.

Another philosopher that supported the ontological argument is Descartes. Descartes stated that God is defined as being perfect with characteristics such as omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. Descartes also suggested that existence is a feature of perfection and therefore it can be logically assumed that God exists. This argument suggests the ontological argument as a successful proof for the existence of God.

However another criticism of the ontological

argument comes from Russell. He states that the concept of existence cannot be used as a first order concept. This means to give something the characteristic of existence. Russell suggests existence is only a second order concept which means something may have the attribution of existence however cannot be used as proof. Therefore Russell would argue the ontological argument is not a successful proof of God.

One more supporting view of the ontological argument is from Plantinga. Plantinga agrees that using ~~modal~~ modal logic and suggests there is a world where what no greater world can be thought of. In this world, exists a being of perfection with traits such as omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. Therefore this being must exist in our world, this being known as God. Plantinga's view promotes the ontological argument as being a successful proof of the existence of God.

On the other hand, Gaunilo would criticise both Anselm and Plantinga for using logical tricks. ^{Gaunilo} ~~Plantinga~~ argues that Plantinga is suggesting the existence of a world which no greater world can be thought of is absurd logic and analysis.

use of logical contradiction is just a trick. Therefore the ontological argument is not a successful proof for the existence of God.

In conclusion the ontological argument is not a successful proof for the existence of God due to criticisms from Gaunilo, Aquinas and Russell proving that the ontological argument lacks validity due to the incapability of verification.



The candidate shows some good knowledge and understanding of Ontological Arguments and the criticisms. However, each idea is not fully analysed or developed.

The views of Gallino, Aquinas and Russell are present, and briefly analysed, but further development would be needed to progress up the levels of response.

Level 4

Total: 21 marks



Underline the key words in the question and use these for analysis.

For example, in this question 'successful' can mean because it has clear reasoning, or it provides 'faith seeking understanding', or it responds fully to criticisms.

Paper Summary

- **Respond precisely to the wording of the question**

Candidates must pay close attention to the specific phrasing of each question. Some responses were overly general and did not engage with the precise focus, resulting in lost marks.

- **Understand different question types and command terms**

Candidates should develop distinct approaches for different command words such as *explore*, *assess*, and *evaluate*. A 'one-size-fits-all' essay structure is unlikely to meet the varying demands of these tasks.

- **Ensure full coverage of the specification**

All areas of the specification should be given due attention in teaching and revision. Less commonly-addressed topics, such as Process Theology and theories of religious language (eg *bliks*, Language Games), must not be overlooked.

- **Promote flexible and responsive thinking**

Candidates should be encouraged to adapt their knowledge to suit the specific demands of the question, rather than relying on rehearsed or generic essay formats.

- **Use philosophical terminology accurately and meaningfully**

Candidates must understand and apply key terms, such as *a priori*, *contingency*, and *predicate*, correctly and with relevance to the argument being made. Terms should not be used without explanation.

Grade boundaries

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