

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H173

For first teaching in 2016

H173/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper 1 series overview

H173/01 assesses AS Level philosophy of religion. There are three questions of which candidates are required to answer two. There are no compulsory questions. All questions are marked out of 30. AO1 (knowledge and understanding) and AO2 (analysis and evaluation) carry equal marks. There is no separate mark for the quality of written communication, but rather this is assessed as part of the AO2 level descriptors.

It is very important that candidates read the questions carefully and focus their responses on this rather than the general topics. Candidates can do well in this paper by applying their knowledge of primary and secondary sources, including scholarly opinions to the particular questions that are asked. Candidates also need to make good use of sources of wisdom and authority including the primary works of the philosophers they have studied, and scholarly opinions related to those philosophers. It is useful to be accurate about which scholars had which opinions and about the chronological order in which they were writing. It is also useful for candidates to include a conclusion that directly addresses the question asked, giving the candidate's judgement on the arguments they have presented.

Candidates who did well on this paper demonstrated good knowledge of the areas about which they were questioned, specifically the theodicy of Augustine, Plato's theory of soul and Aquinas' Fifth Way. They focused on the specific question asked rather than on the general topics of theodicy, the soul and Aquinas' Five Ways. They presented and evaluated the arguments for and against the question using accurate knowledge of a variety of scholars. They ended their essays with a clear conclusion summarising the main arguments without being overly repetitive and they offered a judgement using clear and reasoned argument.

Candidates who did less well tended to be brief and lacking in relevant detail. They often concentrated on the general issue rather than the specific question. Some gave general arguments from 'common sense' about the question but demonstrated no use or knowledge of scholarly opinion.

Q2 was the best answered with most candidates able to give a reasonable account of Plato's theory of soul, although AO2 was less successful. Overall there was a fairly consistent spread of choice across the three questions although Q3 was slightly less popular and also the one on which candidates were least successful, often not focussing on the Fifth Way.

<i>Candidates who performed well</i>	<i>Candidates who did not perform well</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated clear and detailed knowledge. • Addressed the specific question asked. • Made good use of scholarly opinion correctly understood and applied. • Finished with a clear and well-reasoned conclusion directly addressing the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated little accurate knowledge. • Did not develop their responses using depth, breadth and detail. • Addressed the general topic rather than the specific question set. • Offered no clear conclusion or judgement on the question.

Question 1

1* Critically discuss the theodicy of Augustine.

[30]

This question was the second most commonly chosen. The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of Augustine's theology and made good use of specialist language. Most were aware of Augustine's idea of evil as a privation of good rather than as a thing in itself. Most could describe the Fall of Adam and Eve and relate this to the concept of original sin as an explanation for the suffering of the apparently innocent. Fewer were aware of the idea of the Fall of the angels and those that did rarely understood the cosmic significance of this. A number of candidates mentioned either the Fall of Angels or the Fall of Adam and Eve but often not both. Many candidates were aware that its reliance on the literal truth of the Genesis account is a serious flaw of the Augustinian theodicy and many discussed this at some length and often very successfully, using the arguments of Dawkins to back up the idea that in a world that no longer accepts the literal truth of the Genesis account, Augustine's theodicy can be found wanting. Few, however, seemed to be aware that it is possible to argue for a metaphorical reading of Genesis to which Augustine's ideas can be applied.

Many, if not most candidates compared Augustine's theodicy to that of Irenaeus and Hick (although many were unaware of the difference between the two). Most concluded that that of Irenaeus is superior and sits more comfortably in a modern world. This approach was entirely appropriate, and many candidates did it very well, however, some gave too great a proportion of their response to this and as a result did not give enough information about Augustine's theodicy to reach the higher levels.

Many candidates successfully used arguments such as that of an excess of evil and suffering to refute Hick's account of suffering as useful and meaningful. Many also suggested that Augustine does not account for the suffering of the innocent successfully.

Some candidates claimed that Augustine's theodicy does not account for natural evil, thus demonstrating an incomplete understanding of the theory. Others, however, explained this very well.

Overall, the question was well answered and showed good knowledge and understanding as well as an ability to produce a clear, logical line of reasoning. Many candidates made very good use of the arguments of a variety of scholars to support their arguments.

Key point

Candidates should be aware of the chronology of the scholars they use so as to avoid claims such as that Augustine argued against Hick or Dawkins, or, more usually, that Irenaeus' theodicy was a reaction to Hick.

Most Successful Responses

- Demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of Augustine's theodicy.
- Understood the cosmic significance of the Fall for Augustine.
- Related Irenaeus/Hick's theodicy specifically to Augustine in order to show the strengths or weaknesses of the Augustine.

Least Successful Responses

- Demonstrated limited knowledge of Augustine's theodicy and often spent too much time on Irenaeus and Hick.
- Often claimed that Augustine does not account for natural evil.
- Concentrated on the arguments for and against Irenaeus/Hick with little or no reference to Augustine.

Question 2

2* To what extent does Plato successfully explain the relationship between the body and the soul?
[30]

This was the most commonly attempted question and candidates were, generally, successful in meeting the demands of the question. Some candidates struggled somewhat with the AO2, suggesting that Plato is successful because his theory makes sense or because it is in sympathy with the beliefs of a number of religions, most notably, Christianity. Some suggested that Plato was not successful in so far as his theory differed from Christianity, but did not really explain this. Some candidates believed that either Plato or Aristotle, or both, were Christians and based much of their response on this assumption.

Most candidates were able to give a good account of Plato's theory of the soul with most mentioning the Realm of Forms and the complete difference between the body and the soul. Many gave the analogy of the chariot, although a significant minority thought that this showed the relationship between the soul and the body rather than between the three parts that make up the soul according to Plato.

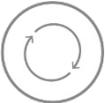
Again there was often confusion about the chronology of thinkers leading to claims that Plato argued with Ryle or similar anachronisms.

Aristotle's ideas concerning the soul were not well understood and less successful candidates often became quite confused around this area. Another area that caused confusion to many candidates was Ryle's argument about the 'Ghost in the Machine'. Most thought that Ryle was arguing that there was a 'ghost in the machine' which was the soul, rather than that he thought that this Platonic model demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of 'soul'.

Many candidates did not do as well as they might otherwise have done at AO2 because they based much of their argument around the idea that Plato, as a rationalist, offered no evidence for the existence of either the soul or the Realm of Forms, and that these were serious weaknesses compared to the empiricists such as Aristotle or Dawkins. In fact, Plato offers a substantial amount of evidence which could have been a more fruitful locus of discussion. Several candidates discussed Meno as a source of evidence for the Realm of Forms, but relatively few know about his evidence for the soul in terms of its simplicity and irreducibility, or the argument from opposites. The most successful candidates, on the other hand, were aware of the inherent contradiction between Plato's assertion that the soul is indivisible and that it is tripartite and used this as a criticism of his arguments.

	Misconception	Many candidates were unaware that Plato did offer evidence and arguments to support his theories. Some suggested that he merely stated his ideas and that this was a major weakness of his theory.
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A small number of candidates were aware of Plato's Analogy of the Cave but many, possibly most were uncertain about how it should be understood and so missed the opportunity to link it to what they had said about the Realm of Forms.

	AfL	Candidates should be aware of Plato's arguments for the existence of the soul, both from the case of the slave boy and his 'intrinsic knowledge' and also from the irreducible simplicity of the soul and the 'argument from opposites'.
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Overall there were a wide range of outcomes across this question with some becoming quite confused and so failing to produce a clear argument and others providing a clear and detailed argument informed by a variety of scholars both ancient and modern.

Question 3

3* 'Aquinas' Fifth Way does **not** demonstrate the existence of God.' Discuss.

[30]

This was the least popular question, and also, overall, the least successfully answered. Many candidates seemed uncertain of which of Aquinas' demonstrations of the existence of God was the Fifth Way and a minority of answers focused exclusively on the Cosmological or occasionally the Ontological argument and as a result gained very few marks. Those that did recognise this as a version of the Teleological argument often seemed to know comparatively little about Aquinas' argument and as a result spent most of the response concentrating on William Paley's Watch Maker Argument and on the criticisms that can be levelled specifically against this. Many also seemed unaware that a key component of Paley's argument is not only that the watch clearly has a designer, but also that it is clearly designed for a purpose. This is the core of the teleological argument and very few candidates specifically addressed it.

Having said this, there were a significant minority of candidates who performed very well on this question. Many of these used the analogy of the arrow from Aquinas, and demonstrated their understanding not only that there was an archer, but also that the arrow was clearly directed towards a purpose. Some, but noticeably fewer, also wrote about Aquinas' belief that in nature all things, including inanimate things such as rivers, move towards a clear purpose that cannot have come from themselves and so must have been given to them from outside. Some candidates then added Aquinas' conclusion "This we understand to be God" and used this as the basis of their argument; using the ideas of Hume and others to question the validity of this conclusion.

Exemplar 1

Firstly, ~~the~~ Aquinas observed the world and what he observed ^{was} that there was order and purpose in the world. For example he ~~of~~ had a river runs to meet the ocean and so on. He was also ~~was~~ extremely inspired by ~~nature~~ Aristotle's natural teleology ~~as~~ that ~~was~~ everything in nature has a purpose and he gave the example of the webbed feet in ducks seems designed in order to aid them in swimming. ~~While his argument may seem very solid and~~ ~~was~~ it in fact ~~contradicts~~ what modern science tells us. Aquinas then drew the conclusion that this purpose can not happen by itself and it was given by a divine entity which he believed to be God. While his argument may seem very solid, it in fact contradicts what modern science tells us. Biologist ~~the~~ Richard Dawkins would rightly argue that the purpose and order we see in animals is not due to a divine entity giving it ~~a~~ purpose rather the work of evolution by

This is a good example of a candidate who has begun the response with a clear account of Aquinas' Fifth Way and has focused on this throughout. They have not mentioned the analogy of the arrow, although they do return to this later on, but they do include the conclusion 'This all men understand to be God'. This response is focused clearly and precisely on Aquinas and shows a good understanding of his argument rather than relying on Paley.

The flaws in the natural world suggest that it cannot have been created by the Christian God who is presumed to be omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Few, however, were aware of Paley's counter to this. Hume also suggested that any number of other possibilities including multiple gods, or something beyond our understanding would fulfil the requirement for a designer. Some also used the argument that just because a watch has a designer we cannot then expand this to the category of universes, about which we have insufficient knowledge. Many of the candidates who used this material did so successfully and confidently, showing not only a knowledge and understanding of the material but also the ability to manipulate and use it successfully to answer the question they had been asked; meaning that many candidates who did focus on the set question throughout reached the higher levels.

Key point

Candidates need to make sure that they read and understand the question before they begin their response in order to avoid a generalised response to the topic.

Most Successful Responses

- Focused on the set question rather than on Aquinas' Five Ways in general.
- Kept their focus on Aquinas and used Paley's argument to develop it, returning to Aquinas in their conclusion.
- Used a variety of scholars accurately and clearly to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of Aquinas' argument.
- Finished with a clear conclusion that addressed the question as it was asked.

Least Successful Responses

- Gave a general response on Aquinas' Five Ways, often concentrating on the Cosmological or Ontological Arguments.
- Devoted much of their response to Paley's Watch Maker Argument without relating this back to Aquinas.
- Did not use the views of later scholars such as Hume and Dawkins to evaluate the arguments, or showed confusion about the scholars and how to apply them to the question.
- Did not specifically bring the question back to the argument of Aquinas.

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