

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H173

For first teaching in 2016

H173/02 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 2 series overview

The paper showed that most candidates were well prepared for the demands of the examination, understanding what they needed to do, and so there were no instances this year of candidates failing to understand the rubric and answering all three questions. There was no one question that appeared to be more popular than the others.

The paper enabled the candidates to show that they had a solid understanding of the course, both practical and theoretical.

There were, however, some candidates who struggled on the paper, whereas others produced exceptional responses with excellent analytical and evaluative skills.

Candidates who did well generally focussed on the key words in the question such as 'reason' in question 2, whereas those who did less well tended to just write everything they knew on a topic without focusing on the question set.

Once more there were candidates whose handwriting was difficult to read, and this may have affected the ability of the candidates to effectively communicate their arguments.

Question 1

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:
 - religious thought and teaching
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief.
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

1* 'Good business decisions are always good ethical decisions.' Discuss.

[30]

This was a popular choice and candidates were generally able to construct effective responses to the question.

Weaker responses tended to answer in a superficial way, focussing only on examples of poor business decisions, such as Ford Pinto and/or sweatshops, and almost ignoring any ethical thought. Alternatively, weaker responses tended to simply outline everything they knew about business ethics or everything they knew about Kantian and/ or utilitarian approaches to business ethics.

Stronger responses were able to engage with the question well and use analysis and evaluation to discuss the significance of the statement. These responses gave a variety of examples of business practice both good (for example Lush and Body Shop) and bad (usually Ford Pinto, sweatshops and Primark) and relate these to specific ethical concepts such as corporate social responsibility, whistleblowing, environmental impact and stakeholder theory.

Exemplar 1

		profit. An example of this
		would be the Body Shop as
		they campaign for fairtrade
		and animal rights which
		makes the business more
		appealing. However, some argue this
		could be difficult as it can
		limit the ability to be in
		competition with other businesses.
		So acting ethically could
		damage a business in some respects
		as it may not be the most
		profitable plan. Kantian ethics would

The Body Shop has been given as an example here.

Exemplar 2

		Good business decisions are not always good ethical decisions as argued by Milton Friedman that a business's motivation is profit which is coherent for running of a good business to be able to survive, grow and potentially gain or employment which leads to good ethics. Although this is massively undermined by the study of Primark's stores in Bangladesh's Rana Plaza with a weak correlation per up to standards and below minimum wage the building collapsed killing
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Interestingly Sir Alan Sugar was often quoted as saying that ethical practice in business is marketed as a unique selling point and so is simply good business. The ideas of Friedman, Solomon, Kant and utilitarian thinkers, including Peter Singer, were used in support of their arguments.

Question 2

2* To what extent is Kantian ethics too reliant on reason in moral decision-making?

[30]

Knowledge of Kantian ethics was generally good, and candidates were able to discuss the deontological, absolutist and rational aspects of Kant. Most candidates showed good understanding of the categorical imperative, but whilst candidates use the concepts of universalisation and people as ends well, they are less comfortable with the idea of living in a kingdom of ends.

Some candidates misread the question, missing the word 'reason' and instead focussing simply on moral decision-making within Kantian ethics. These responses failed to make the links to Kant's objective understanding of morality and only linked reason in a superficial way to the idea of duty.

However, the majority of responses showed an understanding of the implications of the question and used all the concepts in Kantian ethics, including Good Will, Summum Bonum and the Three Postulates to discuss how reliant Kant is on reason within his system.

There were also some responses who attempted to make comparisons to other ethical theories, and in general this was done well, illustrating that others make the same, more or even less use of reason.

Some exceptional responses focussed directly on the term 'reason' within moral decision-making and argued around this and the nature of using reason.

Some pointed out that all ethical thought ultimately stems from the use of reason no matter what ethical theory is used.

Exemplar 3

		<p>notive. Despite the seemingly positive emphasis on reason Kant suggested that although 'reason binds man to man' reason if used correctly would always lead to the same conclusion, however many would argue that reason is a subjective concept and that if anything Kant's concept of universal reason merely diminishes autonomy as it forces individuals to alter their conclusions in order to fit Kant's universal maxims.</p>
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This is an example of how a candidate has examined the word 'reason'.

Question 3

- 3* Assess the view that the approach taken by Fletcher's situation ethics makes moral decision-making entirely individualistic and subjective. [30]

Whilst some candidates seemed to have little idea what the terms individualistic and subjective meant, most were able to formulate an effective response to this question with some candidates identifying these terms as coming from the Papal criticism of situation ethics and using this within their responses.

Generally, there was good knowledge and understanding of the work of Fletcher, with candidates able to discuss the concept of agape and link this to the four working principles and the six propositions. Some responses actually examined the whole idea of agape and whether it was in itself fundamentally subjective.

Some candidates simply referred to the fundamental propositions and glossing over them or going into detail on one or two. When used well, however, these concepts were effective and allowed candidates to develop and discuss the ideas of individualism and subjectivism with situation ethics.

Many candidates made comparison with more deontological ethical theories such as natural law in constructing their responses. This was done well if the candidate resisted the temptation to allow another theory to dominate their response. Slightly weaker responses also spent too much time outlining situation ethics and so spent too little time on analysis and focussing on the question.

Exemplar 4

types of love. Agape refers to the unconditional love of all things and is the word used to describe God in the biblical verse stating that 'God is love'. Although the definition of what agape love ought to be, it is more tricky to come to a universal understanding of this concept. Many would justifiably argue that love, especially agape love, is a concept which can never truly be understood and that it certainly can't be put into words as it is ineffable. Furthermore the concept

Although Fletcher would perhaps disagree, the ineffability of agape love and the disagreements and subjectivity of the concept itself undermines the view that Situation Ethics has an fund objective foundation and supports the conclusion that Fletcher's approach does appear to make ethics an individualistic affair.

This candidate clearly examines the concept of agape and how it could be deemed subjective.

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