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# **GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME**

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**SUMMER 2023**

**A LEVEL  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 2  
A STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION  
A120U20-1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This marking scheme was used by WJEC for the 2023 examination. It was finalised after detailed discussion at examiners' conferences by all the examiners involved in the assessment. The conference was held shortly after the paper was taken so that reference could be made to the full range of candidates' responses, with photocopied scripts forming the basis of discussion. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners.

It is hoped that this information will be of assistance to centres but it is recognised at the same time that, without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation.

WJEC regrets that it cannot enter into any discussion or correspondence about this marking scheme.

## **Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:**

### **Positive marking**

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

### **Rules for Marking**

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

### **Banded mark schemes**

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

#### **Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band**

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content. Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

### **Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark**

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

### **Awarding no marks to a response**

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

## A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions</b>    20 marks</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i></li> <li>- <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i></li> <li>- <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i></li> <li>- <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i></li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>17-20 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>13-16 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>9-12 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5-8 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of some specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-4 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> </ul> <p><b>N.B.    A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'</b></p>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant information.</li> </ul>

Band	<b>Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 30 marks</b> <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>25-30 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
4	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>19-24 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed.</li> <li>• The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
3	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>13-18 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed.</li> <li>• Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7-12 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed.</li> <li>• A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-6 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence.</li> <li>• Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant analysis or evaluation.</li> </ul>

**GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES – COMPONENT 2**  
**A STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**  
**SUMMER 2023 MARK SCHEME**

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

**Section A**

Either,

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 (a) Explain what is meant by the problem of evil. [AO1 20]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Candidates may refer to the logical problem of evil. That is that the existence of evil alongside the characteristics of omnipotence and omnibenevolence ascribed to the God of Classical Theism is illogical. All three things cannot exist simultaneously. They may refer to Epicurus, 'Either God wants to abolish evil...impotent...wicked....why is there evil?' and/or to Mackie's 'Inconsistent Triad'. If God loves his creation he would not want it to suffer, it does suffer, and therefore God must not be powerful enough to stop the evil. If God is powerful enough to stop the evil, he clearly does not so either does not love creation enough to stop evil or is apathetic to its existence.
- It may be noted that it is possible to remove one of these criteria. But doing so would not actually be solving the problem at all. It would either deny the reality of evil which is nonsense, or it would remove a necessary quality of God, hence being unacceptable to most. Reference may be made to Mackie's 'paradox of omnipotence' also: 'can an omnipotent being make things which he cannot subsequently control?'
- Reference may be made to moral and natural evil with examples. Credit will be given when candidates use these types of evil to illustrate the specific problem that their existence causes to a belief in a God. They may point out that for non-theistic religions there is no 'problem' as such.
- Candidates may also refer to the evidential problem of evil. This could include reference to Rowe, who raises the problem of intense human and animal suffering that is unnecessary or pointless. Rowe would accept that some suffering is necessary and beneficial, but a wholly good God would not inflict such large amounts of suffering on either humans or the animal kingdom. This is of no benefit.
- Candidates may also refer to Gregory Paul who raises the problem of the statistical evidence for the large-scale premature deaths that have occurred. This covers all deaths that have happened as a result of either moral or natural evil, before a person has reached their 'ripe' age. This includes genocide, murder, teenage illness and so on. The premature death of anyone is abhorrent, particularly those of innocent children. They have not committed any sin nor have they had the opportunity to make any conscious decisions. Therefore, this evidence poses a massive problem for the belief in an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

- (b) **‘Irenaean type theodicies are still credible in the 21st century.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Whether something can be credible depends on a number of factors. If the question is for religious believers from the Christian tradition, then the credibility is likely to be far higher than for anyone else outside of that tradition.
- The believability of Genesis Chapter one verse 26 as a historical fact could also pose an issue regarding whether Irenaeus’ theodicy is credible. If it is accepted that human beings were indeed made ‘imago Dei’ then this progression from image to likeness appears credible, as each religion teaches that human beings need to develop their spiritual maturity – often through personal trials and tribulations – particularly those of a moral kind.
- Linking this development to the biological principle of evolution – the idea that human beings need to ‘develop’ can also lend to the credibility of Irenaean type theodicies, as it links to the idea of natural selection where an individual becomes ‘stronger’ by surviving the challenges of the natural environment – this could be said to link as a response as to why human beings need to endure natural evil, for instance.
- The age of the theodicy may, for some, be a reason for it to be rejected as it contains some incredible aspects. One such aspect may be the idea that temporary suffering is justified in order to help a human being develop morally and spiritually. Such an idea may not only lack credibility it may be actively considered to be abhorrent to the 21<sup>st</sup> century mind. That God would allow the pain of humans by creating an imperfect world does not correspond to the qualities of the God of Classical Theism.
- Those who follow Liberation Theology may consider this theodicy to be both believable and relevant for their experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The idea that their present suffering will one day be rewarded by a unified existence with God for eternity may present a powerful hope for the future that allows them to survive the challenges of the present. It would also help them to make sense of the idea of God as a God of justice, because eventually their sufferings will have been for a purpose.
- However, the concept of universal salvation may be considered to be the least appealing feature of the theodicy for many and therefore be a significant factor in undermining its credibility. The idea that all will be united with God eventually, no matter what their deeds on earth may appear to be a powerful disincentive for positive moral and spiritual behaviours; as well as suggesting an apparently unjust system.
- A God who is at an epistemic distance from creation may also not be believed by Christians of certain traditions who wish to maintain belief in a God who is immanent.
- The world as a vale of soul-making may also suit some and not others. Some will believe that this tallies with their experience of the world (that God created) whilst others will not believe that this accurately describes their experience.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

Or,

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 (a) Explain Freud's arguments for religion being just a product of the human mind. [AO1 20]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Freud considered religion as an illusion and a neurosis, a coping mechanism for unsuccessfully repressed memories from the past. He believed that it was a 'universal obsessional ritual' that had the function of allowing its followers to avoid imaginary misfortunes (Hell, damnation, etc.) and to indulge in practices that promoted both aggressive and egoistic desires. Freud recognised similarities in the behaviours of his patients and certain religious behaviours, particularly rituals.
- Freud recognised the significance of religion within the sphere of human activity and spent much of his life and work reflecting on the relationship between religious belief and human behaviour. His work largely suggests that religion is unhelpful in allowing humans to develop a healthy psychological maturity, considering it to be an 'infantile' pursuit that prevented human beings from fulfilling their potential.
- Freud used the Oedipus myth to reflect on the complex relationships between parents and children and how this caused the child's psyche to both react and develop. Issues around love, hate, jealousy, rivalry and dependence were recognised as having their root in these relationships and could result in intense emotional turmoil within the individual. A key function of religion, from Freud's perspective, was to give these relationships a narrative that allowed the experience to become a social rather than individualised one. Hence the promotion of father figures as 'omnipotent' in the God figure and the idea of mothers as 'virginal' both of which are ideas firmly established within the Christian narrative. This gave a social acceptability to such considerations that would be considered inappropriate if promoted by the individual without such a context.
- Freud promoted the idea of a collective human 'memory' in his primal horde theory. This idea (which he based around the work of Darwin) suggested that human ancestors killed an alpha-male within the horde, out of jealousy for this male who had had exclusive sexual access to the females of the horde due to their superior strength and intellect. This caused a severe reaction in guilt as this alpha-male had also been highly respected and feared amongst the horde. The guilt then becomes focussed on a totem that in turn becomes the object of devotion and worship and the murdered alpha-male takes on the mantle of a god. This also explained Freud's theory that religion was a way of repressing traumas.
- Religion was also seen by Freud to provide wish-fulfilment and was a reaction against helplessness; religion provided a framework by which those who felt disenfranchised by their experiences in life could make sense of the world through their religious belief and feel empowered by adhering to its rituals and mythologies. Religion is a source of comfort and a way of coping with such things as the hostile forces of nature.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

- (b) 'Empirical approaches prove that Jung's views on religion are wrong.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Jung claimed to be an empiricist, adhering to the phenomenological standpoint. His empirical claim is because he drew on direct observation or experiences that can be analysed, such as visions or dreams. Whilst this method is subjective, he stated that it had complete validity as an empirical method as visions and dreams give an understanding of one's psyche.
- However, others would challenge this as a purely subjective and non-empirical approach. This is because they may claim that visions and dreams are personal and so cannot be valid empirical evidence. Jung also explained his views by using terms that were non-empirical in that they could not be 'tested', such as archetypes. Indeed, the majority of Jung's concepts can be deemed as non-empirical and because they cannot stand up to testing are therefore wrong.
- This leads to his views being labelled as 'unscientific' and in general, 'unscientific' is not given credibility in academic circles. 'Scientific' is normally attached to that which can be seen and acted upon, but this does not apply to Jung's work.
- In contrast to this though it could be argued that even that which is labelled as 'scientific' itself is subject to the accusation of being selective and therefore not a true representation of reality. The scientific method involves hypothesis, testing, observation and an interpretation of the results. Jung would claim that his methodology uses some of those approaches.
- However, a major difference between Jung's methodology and an empirical one is that science would be worried about the degree of subjectivity involved in Jung's experimental work. This, however, does not concern Jung. He wanted to understand a person's mind and he was not concerned with whether this related to anything objective. If the methodology is wrong, then so would his conclusion be, but, that is the same for all approaches.
- In Jung's defence the interpretation used in his work is no different from interpretation that is involved in so much of human activity. We read a book and we interpret it. He looks at the reality of the experience for the subject. Its truth and validity is determined by whether that experience is a genuine one for the subject. His views on religion cannot be verified or falsified, but this may not be a problem with his methodology. Rather, it concerns the very particular nature of the subject matter of religion.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

## Section B

Either,

- 0 3** (a) Explain Hume's challenges to the cosmological and teleological arguments for God's existence. [AO1 20]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Hume's challenges to the inductive cosmological and teleological arguments might be examined as criticism of the use of causation, analogy and anthropomorphism in a number of ways such as follows:
- We have no experience of the creation of the universe and therefore we cannot talk meaningfully about it.
- We link cause and effect together in our minds based on our experience but we cannot apply this to the universe with God as the cause since we have no experience of the creation of universes.
- We see particular causes of parts of the universe but we cannot leap to the conclusion that the whole of the universe must therefore have a cause – fallacy of composition.
- We look for a cause to the universe when in fact there might not be a cause: things happen because it is inbuilt in them just as, of necessity, '18, 27, 36...are products of 9'.
- We have experience of constructions such as 'houses, ships, furniture, machines' but we cannot apply this by analogy to God as 'the universal cause of all' because of the 'vast distance' between the two.
- We should be sceptical of using any analogy to draw conclusions about the universe and its origins because the universe could as well be an animal with God 'as its soul' as a vegetable with 'no organs of sense' etc.
- We cannot make an a priori assumption that this world is a perfectly created world because, for all we know, it is 'very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior standard'.
- We cannot make an a priori assumption about the Creator God because, for all we know, he could be 'some infant deity' or a 'superannuated deity' or a 'dependent inferior deity'.
- We cannot make an a priori assumption that this is the only world which has been created because, for all we know, 'many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out'.
- We cannot make an a priori assumption that there is only one Creator God as, for all we know, using the analogy of the construction of ships, cities and commonwealths, 'several deities combined in contriving and framing a world'.
- We cannot make an a priori assumption that there is a loving Creator of the universe because, for all we know, 'the original Source of all things is entirely indifferent...and has no more regard to good above ill, than to heat above cold'

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

- (b) **‘Challenges to the cosmological and teleological arguments for God’s existence are very effective.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- In agreement with the statement, it might be argued that challenges to the cosmological and teleological arguments are very effective because they are based on evidence rather than a priori belief and assumptions.
- The use of analogy which is the basis for teleological arguments is creative and inventive but ultimately flawed as it tries to link together the known world and an unknown supreme being.
- The challenge of the Big Bang Theory is irrefutable since this singularity can be entirely explained – as Hawkings argued – by understanding that the universe created itself from nothing based on the laws of physics.
- The cosmological argument is challenged by the argument that the universe does not require a creator or cause or purpose: as Bertrand Russell stated: ‘I should say that the universe is just there, and that’s all’.
- The teleological argument is challenged by Darwin’s findings with regard to evolution of the species and survival of the fittest: these have been confirmed by modern science – e.g., the evidence of DNA – and completely undermine the idea of divine design of the universe, the created world and humankind.
- The challenges are effective because they are based on scientific method involving empirical and verifiable or falsifiable data: this cannot be the case with anything regarding the existence of God.
- In disagreement with the statement, it might be argued that challenges to the cosmological and teleological arguments are not very effective because evidence with regard to cosmology – even scientific evidence – must always be theoretical since universes cannot be created in a laboratory which would be the only way of properly testing such theories.
- Challenges to cosmological arguments are not very effective as there must be a starting point to the universe – something which, despite what Hawking argued, ‘lit the blue touch paper and set the universe going’.
- Challenges to teleological arguments are lacking in effectiveness because it cannot be denied that along with scientific views, both are based on a posteriori empirical evidence in reaching conclusions.
- Paley’s watchmaker and the analogy of complex design has not been undermined by challenges to teleology but has indeed been strengthened by Tennant’s anthropic and aesthetic arguments.
- Swinburne argued for the ‘cumulative’ force of several arguments.
- Challenges to the cosmological and teleological arguments are not very effective because they are based on the assumption that religious belief and scientific theories are mutually exclusive: in fact this is not a binary issue since religious belief can often willingly accept each and every finding of science with a God of the Gaps and complementary approach.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

Or,

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(a) **Examine religious experience with reference to conversion and visions.**

**[AO1 20]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- It can be claimed that God is experienced beyond ordinary empirical evidence, through what may be known as a religious experience. A religious experience can be individual or corporate. Such experiences are believed to transmit some information either about the nature of the divine or about the nature of reality.
- Conversion is the change in direction of a life. Conversion can be individual, for example St. Paul or communal, for example at Pentecost, the conversion of the disciples in the Book of Acts. It can involve a change in direction from theism to atheism, atheism to theism (St. Augustine) or a conversion from one religious tradition to another.
- There are a variety of component parts to the description of conversion that candidates could refer to as well as individual and communal. Conversion can be sudden, an unexpected event that happens 'out of the blue'. However, conversion can also be gradual, where a person undergoes almost a 'drip-feed' set of experiences that culminates in conversion.
- The conversion generally brings about a feeling of renewal where the person may describe a feeling of being 'born again' or of becoming a new person. This conversion may be as a result of their own choice to freely surrender themselves to the experience. Others describe being 'taken' by the experience where they are completely passive, with the experience happening to them.
- Visions can be categorised in many ways, but the usual categories are sensory, intellectual and dreams. A vision is a message from God and can be supported by scriptural reference (e.g. Moses in Exodus 3). This possibility is supported by wide personal testimony - Lourdes, Fatima and by Tillich's feeling of 'ultimate concern'.
- However, the categorisation of visions is not clear-cut. It is better to think of it as a prism or the colours of a rainbow. One vision can be comprised of a number of aspects which candidates could exemplify.
- In terms of a sensory vision, an external figure may reveal previously unknown information to the recipient. This may involve an intellectual vision. These generally occur when the recipient is in a conscious state. However, visions involving dreams will occur when the person is in an unconscious state. This too will transmit information to the recipient. Common to most are feelings of great joy, exultation and intellectual illumination, which is impossible to describe, a sense of reality and truth, what Otto would call the 'otherness' of God. Alternatively, they may be ineffable and beyond human expression.
- Visions often require prayer, interpretation and response from the experient – for example, a change of lifestyle. Noted mystics and visionaries include St Teresa and Julian of Norwich.
- Sensory visions can be group visions or individual visions. Some of these visions are corporeal in nature (physical nature) and others are non-corporeal. At times corporeal figures can only be seen by certain people.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

- (b) **‘Religious experience is the only influence on religious beliefs and practices.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Candidates may discuss the component parts of what it means to be a religious believer and how that belief has come about. Some will say the ‘true’ belief which has ramifications for practice, can only arise as the result of a religious experience.
- Others will argue that a religious experience is not a necessary part of religious belief and practice.
- Definitions of religious experiences may state that these are remarkable or significantly unusual events, such as visions, conversions or miracles. In such cases these are experiences outside of the ‘norm’. Equally, the definition may incorporate prayer, ritual action, religious assembly, reading of sacred writings, etc. In this definition it is difficult to separate any religious belief or practice from religious experience.
- Religious experiences may have a direct influence on beliefs and practices that have value for religious communities and individuals for a variety of reasons. For instance, they are a way to affirm a faith system. This affirmation of course can still be valid even if a religious experience does not occur. Indeed, many religious believers have never had a religious experience.
- A religious experience may serve as a means of adding value to this as it may be an integral part of the practice, for instance public prayers or affirmations of faith are often regarded as shared religious experiences. Again, for others, beliefs and practices are a way to promote faith value system. Repetitive actions, restated beliefs (verbalised daily or even more frequently) allow both individuals and communities to demonstrate what is important to them.
- Religious experiences may be held as extremely valuable to both religious individuals and religious communities as they may strengthen faith in the face of opposition from those not part of the religion.
- However, this strengthening of faith can still happen through a personal, or communal, commitment to faith through repeated practices or beliefs that may not be considered to necessarily be a religious experience. Strengthening of faith can be the result of shared values or of a dogged determination to maintain a certain set of beliefs rather than as the result of a religious experience.
- Religious experiences can inform many of the established customs, rituals, beliefs and practices that exist within religious communities. However, some communal religious practices, such as assembling at a place of worship, undertaking a particular ritual action, or observing certain practices at a religious festival may all occur without necessarily be considered to be religious experiences and yet have the considered value of strengthening cohesion within the religious community. This is important as a means of preserving identity and reinforcing common bonds between those who belong to the religion.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

Or,

**0 5**

**(a) Examine the concept of religious language as symbolic.**

**[AO1 20]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Symbolic language is an example of non-cognitive language, that is, its function is not to be taken as a literal set of claims about the subject. It expresses not an objective reality but a set of emotions and attitudes.
- Myth and symbolic language may be referred to as there is often an inextricable link between the two. However, this should be a natural occurrence and credit should not be given for examining myth with no reference to symbol.
- As symbolic religious language has a function other than to transmit objective facts, it is important to understand what the functions of religious language might be. Randall approached religion as a human creation, a symbol-making exercise that should be respected as one of many forms of human expression. His four main functions of religious symbols are:
  - i. to arouse emotion and stir people into action
  - ii. to bind a community together
  - iii. to communicate qualities of experience that fall outside of other forms of communication
  - iv. to foster and clarify our human experience; he spoke about a sense that many humans have of an 'order of splendour'.

Religious symbols allow us to express a dimension of life pointed to by the term 'splendour'. Just as the artist and the musician can arouse feelings within humans then so too can the prophet and the saint.

- Randall did not see religion and science as incompatible. Both natural theology and the natural sciences have a common goal, which is to unveil how the world works. Rational thought is no threat to religion.
- Tillich warned against turning God into an idol by thinking that human language could encapsulate God. There is only one literal statement and that is that 'God is Being Itself'. All other statements about God are symbolic. When humans speak about 'God' they are really expressing their 'Ultimate Concern'. 'Ultimate Concern' is that to which we completely surrender our will, our intellect, our whole being. Since God is related to our ultimate concerns, but is always beyond them, the only appropriate language to use for God is symbolic language. Religious expressions, doctrine, poetry and art are symbols of 'Ultimate Concern'.
- Tillich distinguished between a sign and a symbol. Both point beyond themselves but a symbol 'participates in that to which it points'. In other words, the symbol has become synonymous with that to which it points even if it was arbitrarily contrived originally.
- Other characteristics of symbols include that they open up levels of reality that were otherwise closed to us. This is because that symbols unlock dimensions of our soul, achieving that which literal language can never achieve. 'The language of faith is the language of symbols'.
- Tillich believed that symbols such as national flags stir emotions and feelings of immense magnitude. Religious symbols perform the same function and evoke profound emotions for religious traditions.
- Symbols arise out of a particular situation as opposed to being contrived or produced intentionally. They will last for only as long as the situation, from which they grow, lives.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

- (b) **‘Symbolic religious language is only meaningful to religious believers.’  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- There may be consideration of the problem regarding meaning for all humans, irrespective of whether they are believers or not. How do we know whether a symbol is adequate? Can symbols successfully represent that which is beyond our experience? How would we know? Can it give the wrong insights as there is no way to determine it? As symbols do grow and die it can be argued that they may well cloud meaning rather than unveiling it.
- In context, symbols have a deep significance for those that interact with them. One such example may be the Christian Cross. For a non-religious person it may have a superficial meaning as indicative of the religion of Christianity or it may point to the instrument of execution commonly practiced by the Roman Empire. They may understand the notion but lack the passion that a believer would attach to it. A non-believer may have an academic interest in the symbol. However, for the religious believer it may also evoke sacrifice, love, salvation, selflessness, hope, redemption, absolution, community, identity and triumph. In this sense, there is clearly more meaning behind the symbol for a religious believer.
- However, it could be argued that the non-religious person can understand the meaning of this symbol better than the religious believer because they have an objective standpoint with no emotional engagement and therefore do not attach artificial layers of meaning to a symbol that should not be there.
- Tillich suggests that symbols participate in the object that they refer to and it would seem that the participatory aspect of symbolic language would not be meaningful for those who do not engage with the symbol in this way.
- Randall suggested that symbols only work because they have the ability to motivate those who interact with them, and this has a binding effect when the symbol is accessed by groups of people with a common interpretation of the symbol. This social cohesion and emotion fuelling aspect of the symbol and associated symbolic language would not necessarily be meaningful to the non-believer.
- Symbolic religious language depends on context. That context may change and this may change the meaning of the symbolic language. The swastika – a symbol universally held, in the context of Eastern religious and cultural thought, as one of peace, unity and harmony - became the symbol by the Nazi party and the meaning of the symbolic religious language was radically altered due to the different context.
- Perhaps a non-believer would not be able to detach the sign from the symbol. Equally they may not merge the symbol with that to which it points thereby missing the true meaning of the symbol.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**