



GCE AS MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**AS
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 2
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF
RELIGION**

B120U20-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

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 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.

AS Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions [25 marks] <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
5	21-25 marks - Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. - An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. - The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. - Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. - Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	16-20 marks - Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. - A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. - The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. - Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. - Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	11-15 marks - Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. - A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. - The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. - Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. - Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	6-10 marks - Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. - A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. - The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. - Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. - Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-5 marks - Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. - A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. - The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. - Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. - Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective A02- Part (b) questions [25 marks] <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	21-25 marks • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	16-20 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	11-15 marks • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	6-10 marks • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-5 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

EDUQAS GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COMPONENT 2: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

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

Section A

1. (a) Outline the concept of '*a priori*', with reference to deductive proofs.

[AO1 25]

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

- The concept of a priori may be outlined as a form of knowledge (way in which we can know something). A priori refers to knowledge that is arrived at independent of evidence or sense experience. Candidates may contrast this with a posteriori, knowledge drawn from evidence and experience.
- A priori reasoning relies on deductive logic, that is, where a specific conclusion is drawn from the premises alone. A priori reasoning is therefore based on an understanding of the language used, and is presented in a deductive, logical, sequenced fashion, where conclusions necessarily follow on from premises and are therefore self-evident. Candidates may contrast the nature of deductive proofs with inductive proofs to demonstrate the difference.
- Candidates may refer to ontological arguments for God's existence as examples of deductive proofs, which uses a priori reasoning based on the analytical understanding of the nature and meaning of the term 'God'. Ontological arguments conclude that God must exist based on the definition of what God is, so 'God exists' is a priori and deductive, because it is true by definition and requires no external evidence.
- St Anselm's ontological arguments are based on his definition of God as 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived,' which he believed to be a universal understanding of God. If one accepts this understanding of the term 'God,' then deductively, God must exist and to deny God's existence would be absurd and self-contradictory.
- Descartes formulated an ontological argument based on theoretical deduction rather than observation or experience. His definition of God was one of a 'supremely perfect being.' He saw existence as a quality that integrally belonged to God, a priori, in the same way that three angles make a triangle or as a mountain entails a valley. For God, existence is a predicate, God's defining predicate. One cannot conceive of a supremely perfect being without existence.
- Malcolm proposed a modal logic form of the ontological argument based on deductive logic and Anselm's Proslogion 3. To accept the notion of a being which is TTNWCBC and then also accept that being to be subject to the limits of the possibility of non-existence, is a logical absurdity. Therefore, such a being must necessarily exist, a priori.

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

(b) 'Deductive arguments for God's existence are ineffective.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- Many scholars believe inductive arguments are more effective than deductive arguments, as they have stood the test of time and their inductive nature using a posteriori evidence which is more compatible with the demand for empirical proof in today's world, is more effective in showing God's existence to be at least possible or at best, probable. Empiricists such as David Hume argue "a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence."
- St Aquinas believed that we could only inductively argue for God's existence based on observation of the world, as although God's existence was self-evident to God, it could not be to us due to our finite minds and inability to understand God's essence.
- Kant's critique of the deductive logic used in ontological arguments is powerful and demonstrates that one cannot simply define something into existence. Illustrations could be made to Kant's 100 thalers or triangle example, or Gaunilo's 'greatest island' parody of St Anselm's *reductio ad absurdum*.
- However, deductive arguments may be considered effective because of the fact they are a priori and use logical reasoning to reach an inescapable conclusion. If the premises are sound, then the conclusion is valid as the conclusion necessarily follows on from the premise and so must be accepted. It would be irrational to disagree.
- Being a priori, deductive arguments also avoid relying on potentially subjective interpretation of sense experience and the risk of being mistaken or misinformed.
- The analytical nature of deductive arguments such as forms of the ontological argument may also be effective for theists and believers in the Abrahamic traditions, as for them the existence of God is self-evident.
- Theists may view deductive arguments to be more effective than inductive arguments as believers usually want to do more than demonstrate the existence of God as possible or probable.
- There are also modern supporters of deductive arguments such as Malcolm with his ontological argument based on the concept of God as an unlimited being, suggesting the reasonableness of the deductive logic used.
- However, Plantinga admits his own version of the ontological argument does not serve as a logical proof of God, only that it is reasonable to believe in God, thereby asserting his argument to be no more effective than inductive arguments.
- Specific reference may be made to the effectiveness of ontological arguments but the question is wider than that alone. Appropriate use of the band descriptors should be used if an answer is confined solely to ontological arguments.

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

2. (a) Outline challenges to the ontological argument.

[AO1 25]

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

- The ontological argument is a priori and analytic, in that it attempts to prove the existence of God by virtue of the meaning of the term 'God', without reference to sense experience or evidence. Therefore, empiricists such as David Hume would challenge the argument on these grounds as "a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence."
- Furthermore, the ontological argument uses deductive reasoning, where the conclusion logically follows on from the premise. However, given that there is no universally agreed understanding of the term 'God', if one disagrees with the definition of God in the premise then the conclusion does not necessarily follow.
- The argument may be also challenged on the grounds that it is merely a play on words and uses nothing more than circular logic.
- The idea of God as the 'greatest possible', 'supremely perfect' or as an 'unlimited being' can be challenged on the grounds of the terms used. Are these ideas meaningful, can they have a maximum?
- Gaunilo challenged St Anselm's first ontological argument by imitating the reductio ad absurdum technique but replacing the term 'God' with 'greatest island.' This demonstrated that the argument could analytically prove the existence of anything and therefore proved the existence of nothing as the logic must be invalid. The greatest island must exist in reality as it is greater to exist in reality than just in the mind, yet it does not. One can always imagine a greater, more perfect island.
- In addition, St Anselm's argument in Proslogion 2 has been challenged due to the claim that there are some things that are truly better in the mind than in reality. Our minds can imagine incredible ideas which, if materialised, may not be anywhere near as great as they were when conceived in the mind.
- Kant famously challenged Descartes' ontological argument on the following grounds, but they are often applied to St Anselm's version too. Firstly, that one cannot define something into existence, negation is not contradiction. One cannot posit a triangle yet deny its three sides, however one can deny both the triangle and its three sides – that is one can reject the triangle altogether. Therefore one can deny both the concept of God and God's existence, without issue by rejecting God altogether. Secondly, existence is not a predicate as it does not add anything to the concept. It only claims that the concept has a basis in reality, which can be checked. Kant gives the example of 100 thalers in reality, not containing the least coin more than the idea of 100 thalers. Therefore the proposition 'God exists' is not analytic at all as it tells us nothing further about the concept of God and has no essence to be contradicted. 'God exists' is consequently, a synthetic claim.

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

(b) 'Ontological arguments for God's existence are effective.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- The ontological argument may be regarded as effective by some because it is an a priori argument and a deductive proof. If the premises are accepted then the conclusion is logically necessary and inescapable.
- Ontological arguments may also be effective because they are a priori and so do not rely on (subjective) evidence such as posteriori arguments, which only lead to possible or at best probable conclusions.
- Ontological arguments can be effective for believers of theistic religions, because for them, the existence of God is self-evident and therefore ontological arguments demonstrate how belief in God's existence is rational.
- Modern versions of the argument such as that of Malcolm's modal logic form of the argument still arise, showing the reasonableness of ontological arguments and that some today still find it effective.
- Many believers would accept Anselm's definition of God as 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived,' or Descartes' definition of God as the 'supremely perfect being,' and therefore given God's unique nature, argue that ontological arguments are effective in demonstrating God's necessary existence.
- However ontological arguments may be considered ineffective because counter-claims e.g. Gaunilo's island parody are considered more effective. Gaunilo demonstrates that the logic of ontological arguments must be faulty because you cannot just define something into existence.
- Kant's objections may be considered more effective. Kant argues that no contradiction arises if both subject and existence are rejected, and existence is not a genuine predicate, rather existence is instead a synthetic claim.
- Ontological arguments may be considered ineffective because they are a priori, if the premises are not accepted then the conclusion can be rejected. The premises of ontological arguments tend to rely on a definition of God, which could be outdated and incorrect.
- In general, the contemporary world asks for empirical proof before accepting something as valid. A priori arguments cannot give us this 'scientific' proof and therefore ontological arguments may be considered ineffective by modern standards.
- Classical arguments for God's existence such as the cosmological and teleological arguments may be seen as more effective. They provide us with far more reliable grounds for arguing for God's existence than a priori proofs do. They have stood the test of time and continue to be relevant due to their relationship with the world around us and scientific discoveries.

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

Section B

3. (a) Explain challenges to cosmological arguments.

[AO1 25]

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

- Cosmological arguments can be challenged due to their inductive nature, as they cannot be considered a logical proof. They can only point towards a conclusion that is possible, or at best, probable.
- Cosmological arguments are a posteriori, meaning they rely on observation which can be mistaken or subjectively interpreted. We may only have partial knowledge of the world and what we perceive may not be representative of reality. We also may be biased in our view of the world, and there may be limits on what we are capable of understanding.
- David Hume challenged cosmological arguments on several grounds, one being fallacy of composition. Just because we observe cause and effect within the universe does not mean this rule applies to the universe itself. Hume argues that due to this assumption, cosmological arguments are guilty of making an inductive leap.
- Hume also argues for the possibility of infinite regression: if everything does indeed need a cause, what caused God? However, if God does not require a cause, then the universe could also be something that does not require a cause, conforming to the logic of Occam's razor.
- Kant challenges the cosmological argument on the grounds that we cannot argue for God's existence from observation, as God lies outside the realm of sense experience. To suggest God is the cause of the universe would be nonsensical.
- There are modern challenges, for example those of Russell who argued that the existence of the universe is a brute fact and therefore does not require an explanation, and Kenny who argued that a first mover is not necessary as things are capable of moving themselves, as demonstrated in the principle of inertia and Newton's first law of motion.
- There are challenges due to alternative scientific explanations such as the Big Bang, which accounts for the existence of the universe without requiring God as the uncaused first cause. The Steady State theory also challenges the Kalam cosmological argument as it suggests the universe might not have had a beginning.
- Cosmological arguments may also be challenged on the grounds that they do not necessarily point to the existence of the God of classical theism.

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

- (b) **‘Cosmological arguments for God’s existence are persuasive in the 21st century.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- There are many scholars and philosophical movements advocating cosmological arguments suggesting they are still persuasive and popular today.
- Due to the a posteriori nature and reliance on empirical evidence and observation of the universe, cosmological arguments could be said to be persuasive in the 21st century as they rely on scientific methods.
- Cause-effect is a universally accepted scientific principle therefore it is rational to understand the universe as an effect which requires a cause.
- The universe clearly exists, so the Kalam cosmological argument may be a persuasive explanation for why there is something rather than nothing.
- Scientific discoveries can support cosmological arguments, for example cosmic background radiation (‘afterglow’ of the Big Bang) which supports the Kalam cosmological argument as it suggests the universe did indeed have a beginning.
- The discovery of evidence for the Big Bang also challenges the possibility of infinite regression, supporting Aquinas’ cosmological arguments.
- However, it could be argued on the grounds of Occam’s razor, that cosmological arguments are not persuasive in the 21st century as there is no need to go beyond the universe itself as an explanation. As Hume and then Russell argued, if God does not require a cause, then the universe could also be something that does not require a cause. To deny the possibility of infinite for the universe but not God, would also be a philosophical fallacy.
- Cosmological arguments have been accused of making an inductive leap, as we have no experience of a universe being formed and therefore cannot assume that the principles we observe in this universe such as cause-effect apply outside of it.
- Furthermore, any evidence we observe could be misinterpreted due to our limited perspective, understanding and bias. Therefore, inductive arguments where the conclusion is only one possibility, are not in line with 21st century emphasis on objective empirical evidence.
- Additionally, it could be argued from a 21st Century perspective that cosmological arguments are not persuasive in arguing for the God of classical theism, as it would not be loving to create the world due to the suffering experienced by all species who consequently live in it.

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

4. (a) Examine Rudolf Otto's views on mystical experiences.

[AO1 25]

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

- In mystical experiences, God is encountered beyond ordinary empirical evidence. This is usually individual and subjective, though may be corporate.
- Aspects of mystical experiences may be exemplified with reference to specific mystics, e.g. St Teresa of Avila or particular cases of claimed mystical experiences.
- Otto's views on religious experience involves the concept of the 'numinous.' In his view this is an experience that is the basis of all genuine religion. The meaning of numinous is "denoting or relating to a numen" and it describes the power or presence or realisation of a divinity. It is a non-rational and unique form of experience, totally unlike everyday experiences.
- According to Otto, an experience of the Numinous has three components. These are often designated with a Latin phrase: *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, meaning 'fearful and attractive mystery.'
- As *mysterium*, the numinous is "wholly other", entirely different from anything we experience in ordinary life, so whilst it can be experienced it cannot be understood. It evokes a reaction of silence, awe and wonder.
- The numinous is also a *mysterium tremendum*. It refers to the fearsome experience of God's overwhelming majesty and energy, provoking a sense of terror and human nothingness, and consequently an absolute dependence on God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom" - Proverbs 9:10
- Finally, the numinous presents itself as *fascinans*, the compulsive and attractive nature of the experience creates a desire for a relationship with God and creates an awareness in the experient of the need for salvation. For example, St Teresa of Avila recorded that her visions left her "all on fire with a great love of God."
- Otto claimed that many of the visions recorded in the Bible are experience of the numinous. For example, Moses' encounter with the burning bush. "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." – Exodus 3:6
- Otto believes that religious experience is something which all humans are predisposed to.
- Candidates should be able to provide appropriate exemplification from the tradition of one or more world religions in their explanation. Stronger responses will link to the characteristics given by Otto as opposed to being self-contained exemplifications.

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

- (b) **‘Mysticism has more impact on religious belief and practice than any other type of religious experience.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- Candidates may provide examples from individuals and traditions of one or more world religions in their evaluation.
- It may be argued that mysticism has great impact on religious belief and practice because many of the major world religions are founded on mystical experiences e.g. angelic visions, prophetic dreams, etc.
- Mystics often claim that mystical experiences reveal truths undiscoverable through other means (noesis), which can have lasting impact in terms of religious beliefs held by individuals and communities. For example, through Guru Nanak’s spiritual awakening the oneness of humanity was revealed.
- Mysticism can be said to have a direct impact upon religious practice, as specific activities, rituals or actions are undertaken in order for the mystic to transcend their own reality and gain unity with the divine. Examples may be given, such as the practice of Sema (sacred dance) in Sufism, St Teresa of Avila’s illustrations of a disciplined prayer life, and Jewish kabbalism.
- However, prayer could be said to have more impact because it is often described as a conversation with God, open to all, whereas mysticism can be seen to be exclusive and only open to a few. Prayer can deepen a person’s faith and help them come to a greater understanding of God and God’s purpose for their lives. For example, through God answering prayers, either in ways the person could not previously imagine or in a spectacular way such as a miraculous healing.
- Responses may argue that conversion experiences have more impact because the ‘fruits’ of the conversion are empirically verifiable e.g. a change in a person’s actions. Examples could be given such as Saul’s conversion experience.
- Public visions and corporate religious experiences can also be empirically verified thus making them a more valid type of religious experience which therefore could be said to have more impact on wider religious belief and practice.
- Those who are mystics often live apart from society and therefore may be said to have no real impact or relevance on the religious beliefs and practice of mainstream religious traditions.
- Responses may argue that as with many types of religious experience, mysticism and mystical experiences are subjective and are not open to verification. In addition, some are described as ineffable and may be categorised as apophatic, and therefore they could have limited impact on wider religious belief and practice beyond the experient. Reference may be made to the challenges presented by Franks Davis (description-related; subject-related and object-related challenges).

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

5. (a) **Outline the problem of evil with reference to J. L. Mackie and Gregory S. Paul.**

[AO1 25]

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

- The problem of evil presents a problem in terms of contradictions or compromises regarding the attributes of God, both of which jeopardise belief in the God of classical theism.
- Epicurus is credited with presenting the problem of evil in its classical form. He says 'Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. If God can abolish evil, and God really wants to do it, why is there evil in the world?'

J. L. Mackie

- Mackie formulated the logical problem of evil into an 'inconsistent triad, where he suggests evil should not exist if God is all-loving and omnipotent. If God were all-loving he would want to stop suffering. If he were omnipotent he would be able to. Evil clearly exists so all three statements cannot be held to be true simultaneously. The three statements held together would entail an inconsistency. If two are true, a third must be false.
- Mackie illustrates that to deny either of the traditional beliefs about God would not be acceptable to most theists. Denying God's omnipotence would suggest a God not worthy of worship. Denying God's all-loving nature would contradict the teachings of most religious traditions. Mackie continues, that to deny the existence of evil, which is so tangible in its effects and scope, would be nonsensical.
- Mackie develops his argument, revolving around the free will response as an attempted solution to the problem of evil. Whilst some would argue that evil is necessary to bring about goodness and is necessary for free will, thus God cannot create the impossible, Mackie points to the paradox of omnipotence. God could have but did not create humans who always choose what is right. Therefore 'It is illogical to say that God is omnipotent yet there are things that God cannot do. Whichever way we look at it, God's omnipotence is compromised'.

Gregory S. Paul.

- Gregory S. Paul gave an evidential argument, seeking to show that the presence of suffering in the world makes it likely that the God of Classical Theism does not exist.
- Paul refers to the premature deaths of children who died before reaching maturity, the majority of which died from non-human causes such as malaria, war, and conception that did not result in childbirth. In such cases there was no opportunity for exercising free will or living the way that God commands.
- Therefore, what Paul calls 'the Holocaust of the children', prevents an enormous portion of humans from making a decision about their eternal fate while maximising their suffering. He states this means that the classic Christian 'free will' and 'best possible world' hypothesis are wrong.
- He concludes, if a creator exists, then it has chosen to fashion a habitat that has maximised the level of suffering and death among young humans that are due to factors beyond the control of humans over most of their history.
- Responses may exemplify their explanation by referring to the types of evil. If the universe was created ex nihilo by the God of classical theism (all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing) then how can the world be so dysfunctional in terms of natural evil? If God made all humans in his image, then why are there so many acts of moral evil?

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

(b) 'Natural evil proves that the God of Classical Theism does not exist.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- Natural evil can be considered to be any suffering brought about by events outside of the control of free-will agents. Most commonly, those which occur as part of the natural order. Examples may include suffering that results from natural disasters, disease, and animals that are prey to other animals.
- It could be argued against the statement, that Augustinian type theodicies can account for natural evil through the corruption to the created order, caused by Adam and Eve 'turning away from God' which resulted in the 'absence of good.'
- Additionally, Irenaean type theodicies can account for natural evil as necessary in order to enable humans to develop and grow in the image of God, and so God is justified in allowing this, for the greater good and value such growth brings.
- Natural evil also provides an opportunity for second-order goods, where humans can freely respond with love, kindness and compassion, and thus spiritually develop, for example the charity we see in the aftermath of natural disasters.
- Furthermore, due to the need for epistemic distance, natural evil maintains the world as a place where the existence and non-existence of God are just as plausible, so humans have true freedom in how to respond to God.
- However, there is the logical problem raised in the corruption of creation. Perfection is immutable. If creation was originally perfect, how could it be so corrupted? Geographical and geological evidence contradicts this. Augustinian type theodicies also rely heavily on a literal interpretation of Genesis. If Genesis is not historically accurate then this explanation of natural evil is not valid.
- For Irenaean type theodicies natural evil is more soul breaking than soul making – both in its immense nature and its uneven distribution.
- Responses may refer to the issue of premature deaths. Paul states such natural evils cannot be justified by any 'free will' or 'best possible worlds' hypothesis. If a creator exists, then he is not the God of classical theism as he has chosen to fashion such a habitat as to maximise suffering.
- Responses might refer to Rowe and his example of the lingering death of a fawn in a forest fire. Such suffering is preventable and pointless, and it is not reasonable to believe it is for a greater good, as an omnipotent, omniscient, all-loving being could bring about any greater good some other way. Therefore, if God exists, he is not the God of classical theism.
- Weaker responses may mainly focus on the more general issue of whether natural evil proves God does not exist. Stronger responses will refer specifically to characteristics of the God of classical theism and if these can be justified in light of natural evil.

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