

GCE



CCEA GCE A2
Exemplifying Examination
Performance
Religious Studies

**A2 8: Themes in the
Philosophy of Religion**

This is an exemplification of candidates' performance in GCE A2 examinations (Summer 2018) to support the teaching and learning of the Religious Studies specification.



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EXEMPLIFYING EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE

GCE Religious Studies

Introduction

These materials illustrate aspects of performance from the 2018 summer A2 examination series of CCEA's revised GCE Specification in 2016.

Students' grade A responses are reproduced verbatim and accompanied by commentaries written by senior examiners. The commentaries draw attention to the strengths of the students' responses and indicate, where appropriate, deficiencies and how improvements could be made.

It is intended that the materials should provide a benchmark of candidate performance and help teachers and students to raise standards.

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Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

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GCE: A2 Religious Studies

**ARE81: Themes in the Philosophy of
Religion**

Grade: A Exemplar

Section A

Q1a Explain the challenges that the theory of evolution poses for the Creation Narratives in Genesis. [20]

Student's response

Evolution poses many challenges for the Creation Narratives through their different views of how life was brought about.

Evolution is a biological theory based on the fact that all life originated from one single cell and through mutation and natural selection life has evolved.

Evolution was put forward by Darwin after he travelled to the Galapagos Islands and discovered that for the survival of any species it must adapt in the local environment. He used the Malthus Principle to back up his view that environment has many limiting factors.

The creation narratives are based on the accounts of Genesis 1 and 2. Creationists believe that the creation accounts are historically and literally truth while Accommodationists believe that the Creation accounts are Hebraic Myths laden with Divine principles.

Evolution poses many challenges for the creation narratives through their different interpretations.

Firstly the time scale; evolution teaches us that all life came about millions of years ago. However the creation Narratives in Genesis believe that the world was created in six days.

Secondly evolution suggests that humans have no purpose. They are merely the most complex biological life. However creation suggests that God 'made humans in his image'. We have a purpose to live life according to God as stewards of the planet.

Evolution is the view that all creation of the earth came about by pre-existent matter. Where as God created the world out of nothing (ex nihilo). Jesus said that humans were created 'a little lower than angels'. However it could be argued that God was the first cause of evolution. This would make sense as evolution is very complex and God is omniscient.

In 1860 Bishop Wilberforce and T.H.Huxley had a debate. Wilberforce mockingly asked if it is credible to say Turnips are tending to men or was it through his grandmother or grandfather that he descended from apes?

Overall evolution poses many challenges for the Creation Narratives but we should be respectful of both views, however non sensical they may seem!

Examiner's comments

The candidate provides a well-informed response to the question set. The candidate opens their response by briefly defining the term evolution. The candidate next identifies the source of the creation narratives before briskly identifying the Creationist and Accommodationist view concerning these narratives. The candidate is aware that there are a number of challenges posed by Darwin's theory of evolution and explores a number of these including the time frame and purpose of the twin accounts of the creation/genesis of life. The issues of creation ex nihilo and concept of First Cause are also explored within this response. The Wilberforce and Huxley debate is successfully used to demonstrate conflict between the theory of evolution and traditional Christian teaching and the candidate is able to cite a scholarly view. The candidate ends their response with what is clearly a personal conclusion.

This response could be further honed, for example the candidate adds a paragraph identifying the context to the Darwinian theory before actually addressing the actual task set. There was scope too for fuller development of response, for example the Creationist and Accommodationist positions could have been more fully explored as could the views of relevant scholars. Furthermore, at times the candidate explores the issue of the creation of the universe rather than the creation of life per se (although there is some overlap between the two). Nonetheless, within the time frame set, the candidate successfully meets the criteria for a Band 4 response, demonstrating both a high degree of understanding together with almost totally accurate knowledge of the challenges evolution poses.

Band 4

Q1b Critically assess the claim that it is impossible to reconcile scientific and religious world views. [30]

Student's response

A world view is the most dominant view at a specific time. During the Enlightenment period there was a paradigm shift between world views. A paradigm shift was first imposed by Kuhn.

The two different world views are theocentric and anthropocentric which is religion's world view and science world view respectively. Due to many challenges and views it is argued that scientific and religious world views are irreconcilable.

Firstly there is a difference in methodology. For scientists they use induction, deduction, observation and verification to come up with theories that are best explained after experiments. In comparison religion is viewed through natural theology, revealed theology such as scripture and personal experience. It is through church leaders and the guidance of the Holy Spirit that religious people feel connected to God.

Secondly, science is strongly favoured on its basis of empirical evidence. It was through the 19th Century a group of positivists excluded all other forms of evidence of how the world came about. This extended to religious scripture that was rendered meaningless because of its lack of empirical evidence.

Gould believes that science takes care of the physical world while religion takes care of the mental and spiritual world. He said 'what one sees the other misses and vice versa'. Science and creation should be working together.

Telhard de Cardin believes that God is moving creation forward 'to omega a point of perfection'. Therefore science and creation should be reconcilable.

Science has been involved in ethical problems over the years. It is through reason that utilitarian principles are put forward making ethics relativist. Utilitarianism is seeking happiness. However for the religious believer man is corrupt by his sinful nature therefore we need God given rules like the natural law theory by Aquinas to set moral guide lines.

Science is evolving every day. There are more medical and technological advancements. Humans are central to the progress of life but science challenges religious views on sanctity of life through the advancements in stem cells and abortion becoming legalised.

The Religious are even cautious about technological advancements as it is promoting bitter warfare.

Science is educating students to meet the perceived needs of work today. It is through statistics that students are assessed and measured determining their future.

However religions believe that it is through you ethos that will make you fit for whatever you do.

Scientific and religious world views can be reconcilable. Einstein said that 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind'. According to Wittgenstein they play two very different language games and when all the questions of science have been answered the problems of life remain. There is no reason why they shouldn't work together. Many scientists are religious.

Examiner's comments

The candidate demonstrates an excellent attempt at critical analysis within this response. The candidate opens their debate by noting a paradigm shift between a theocentric and an anthropocentric world view post Enlightenment. There is a clear and coherent structure to this response with each paragraph identifying and exploring a relevant issue or scholarly view. The views of very relevant scholars such as Teilhard de Chardin and Gould are cited, as are the views of relevant schools of thought such as Utilitarianism and Positivism. The candidate here successfully develops their debate using evidence reasoning and scholarship. Complex ideas are cited including for example Teilhard de Chardin's Omega point, Wittgenstein's language games and the distinction between relativist and absolutist stances regarding ethical views. There is reference too, to contemporary examples such as controversy concerning stem cell research and the use of statistical analysis to chart school students' progress. Einstein's famous quotation is also recorded.

There are some errors within this response, for example the idea that Kuhn imposed a paradigm shift, and `the terms theocentric and anthropocentric are rather poorly defined, nonetheless the candidate successfully analyses the claim that scientific and religious world views are irreconcilable. Overall this debate response merits a low Band 5 score.

Band 5

Q2a Discuss the place of God in Kant's understanding of the Categorical Imperative. [20]

The above question could not be exemplified as the candidate's permission could not be obtained.

Q2b "If God is dead, then everything is permitted."

Critically evaluate this claim and consider the extent to which morality is possible in the absence of God. [30]

The above question could not be exemplified as the candidate's permission could not be obtained.

Q3a “The notion of life after death is illogical.”

With reference to this claim, identify and consider the views of materialism on life after death. [20]

Student's response

The notion of life after death as illogical is agreed by Dawkins who stated the idea of the afterlife is 'illogical and implausible'.

Dawkins is a materialist who argued that the notion of life after death is merely a human construct that has been created to escape the fear of death and also to allow for the acceptance of evil and suffering on earth. Dawkins would agree as a materialist that the notion of Life after death is illogical; after we die life ceases to exist. Dawkins argues for the idea of 'The Selfish Gene' genes seek to replicate themselves and this is how we live on, we live on through passing DNA and after this we die with no possible after life. Furthermore, Dawkins talked of cultural and intellectual gene called The Memes which is the spread of ideas and ideas through human culture. He said again of the claim, it is illogical and we may live on through the effect we have had on the world.

Another prominent Materialist who would state that the notion of life after death is illogical is Aquinas. He was a materialist who believed the soul and the body were a unity, conjoined and could not be separated. He argued that the soul was made of three parts, the vegetive, the sensitive and the intellectual and influenced by Aristotle he stated the 'soul animates the body', the 'De Anima'.

Although Aquinas recognises the importance of the soul and its ability to give shape to the body. He does state that when the body dies, the soul ceases to exist, as the unity cannot be broken, thus agreeing with the claim that the notion of the soul is illogical. Aquinas likens the soul and the body to a marble statue, he says the marble gives form to the statue, like the soul gives form to the body, the two cannot be separated.

Although a materialist, Kenny argues that Aquinas' ideas on the soul are inconsistent and he seems 'un sure of what happens to the soul'. The premiss of Aquinas' argument remains however, the two cannot be separated and the soul will cease to exist.

Dawkins asserts the notion that life after death is illogical. Once we die we cease to exist. Anything else is wishful thinking.

Examiner's comments

This was a very well informed response. The candidate directly tackles the question set by opening their answer with a quotation indicating Dawkins' rejection of the concept of life after death. Dawkins is clearly identified as a materialist and the reasons for his rejection of life after death are explored. The candidate next references Aristotle's teachings on body and soul and while the candidate misnames the scholar as 'Aquinas', nevertheless the monist view cited i.e. that the body and soul are inseparable, is relevant to the question task. Kenny's critique of Aquinas' dualist stance is also noted by the candidate. The candidate has successfully integrated the stated claim provided into their response. Greater reference to and exemplification of the views of materialist thinkers (such as Ryles or Flew for example) could have been evidenced within this response. Flew's rejection of the term 'life after death' would have been particularly apt, bearing in mind the quotation provided. In summary this response demonstrates most of the indicators of a Band 4 response including, a high degree of understanding of the views of materialism concerning life after death. Dawkin's teachings on this topic, notably his views concerning the individual's genetic legacy and the notion of the meme, are particularly well handled by the candidate.

Band 4

Q3b Critically assess John Hick's argument in support of resurrection. [30]

Student's response

John Hick was a materialist who attempted to help supporters of materialism who believed that the soul and body were one, but at the same time unlike Dawkins and Aquinas still wanted the premise of the afterlife. To combat this Hick created the Replica theory. Where he believes once we die a replica of ourselves is created and the body becomes an inanimate object. The replica, 'is evident as the person who died'.

The criticisms of John Hick's that's support of the resurrection in the form of the replica theory come in the views of Brian Davies. He argued that John's Hicks view of the after life and resurrection was not plausible. Hick stated the idea of resurrection is possible. Davies criticised Hick by commenting 'I can say it is possible that I will win the Lottery...this does not make it true'. Davies argued that Hick leaves too much room for error in suggesting that we may achieve resurrection but this is not wholly verifiable.

To combat this Hick maintains support of his replica theory and views on the resurrection, stating that this allows his views allow for the premise of an after life where the body and soul will maintain a unity. He offers the case of an afterlife for a materialist, something not previously done.

Another argument against Hicks support of resurrection through the replica theory is stated again by Brian Davies who questions that if a man were to die sick, would the replica contain such sickness. This is a valid criticism whereby Davies tries to explore the afterlife and the idea of resurrection by questioning whether or not this will be pleasant for the materialist will they remain sick?

Hick combats this and provides a strength to the argument by stating that 'all sickness' will be cured. The replica is almost an 'ideal' version of the person who has died. This offers comfort to the Believer and materialist who believes in the afterlife but fears for its complexities and the possibility of sickness.

Finally, a criticism comes in the idea of Jesus' resurrection when he appeared, he was somewhat different, his followers did recognise him, he wasn't a ghost but there was a 'change'. This view challenges Hick's argument of support of the resurrection in the form of the replica theory as it questions whether or not we will retain the same being identity.

Furthermore Hick combats this by stating that the person who has, died will replicate, undergoing his version of resurrection. The person will be 'recognisable' and their body will simply become an inanimate object.

To conclude, Hick offers materialists who believe in the unity of the soul and the body an alternative to the after life. Although met by opposition in the form of Brian

Davies, he provides competent arguments that seek to qualify his claim, offering a valid option of the afterlife through resurrection in the form of the replica theory.

Examiner's comments

This is a reasonable response to the debate task set. The candidate begins by correctly identifying Hick as a materialist thinker. Hick's key idea in support of resurrection, the Replica Theory, is quickly introduced by the candidate as is Davies' critique of Hick's theory. In doing so the candidate directly tackles the debate task set, namely a **critical assessment** of Hick's argument in support of resurrection, rather than simply recounting the actual Replica theory. The candidate demonstrates an understanding of Davies' critique within their answer by drawing out the implication of several of Davies' quotations concerning Hicks' Replica theory. The candidate for example notes that Davies' lottery reference suggests that he believes that Hick is too ready to accept what is possible as probable. A number of flaws in the concept of replica bodies are identified by the candidate: - what happens in the case of illness in the original and how can the replication process itself be verified. The candidate demonstrates their personal opinion within their debate for example arguing that Davies' challenge is 'a valid one' and concluding that Davies' challenge is a 'competent one'.

There is some repetition of response within in this answer, centred around the motivation behind Hick's authoring of the Replica theory, and there is scope for greater development of response, for example their debate centres on only one critic's views. The counterclaim in particular is brief, the candidate argues that the idea of a replica may offer comfort to the believer but fails to provide any further development of this point. Nonetheless this answer does matches some of the criteria of a Band 4 response, making a good attempt at critical analysis using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct balanced argument.

Band 4

Section B

Synoptic Assessment

Theme: Faith, Freedom and Atheism

Q4a Discuss how **one** of the principles of Humanism can be shared by religious believers. You must support your answer with reference to at least one other unit of study. [20]

The above question could not be exemplified as the candidate's permission could not be obtained.

Q4b “The secular world fails to recognise that religious belief is a natural part of what it is to be human.”

Critically assess this claim. You must refer to other aspects of human experience in your answer. [30]

The above question could not be exemplified as the candidate's permission could not be obtained.



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