

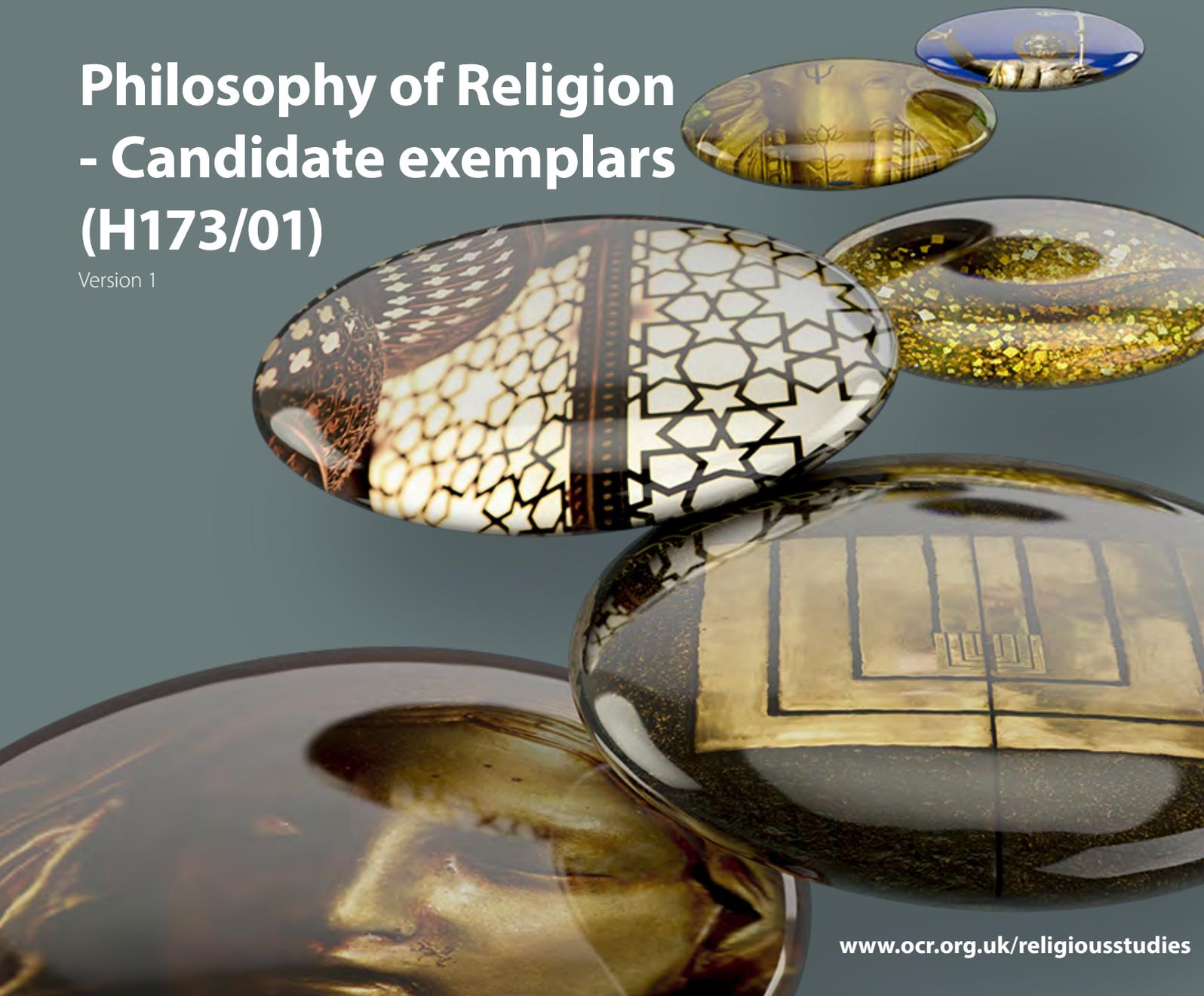
**AS LEVEL**  
*Candidate Exemplars*

# **RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

H173  
For first teaching in 2016

## **Philosophy of Religion - Candidate exemplars (H173/01)**

Version 1



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# Introduction

We asked students to answer questions from the Sample Question Paper for H173/01 Philosophy of Religion: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242914-unit-h173-01-philosophy-of-religion-sample-assessment-material.pdf>.

The sample answers in this resource have been extracted from original candidate work to maintain their authenticity. They are supported by examiner commentary, both in annotations and in summary at the end of the document. Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

Whilst a senior examiner has provided a possible level for each Assessment Objective when marking these answers, in a live series the mark a response would get depends on the whole process of standardisation, which considers the big picture of the year's scripts. Therefore the level awarded here should be considered to be only an estimation of what would be awarded.

How levels and marks correspond to grade boundaries depends on the Awarding process that happens after all/most of the scripts are marked and depends on a number of factors, including candidate performance across the board. Details of this process can be found here: <http://ocr.org.uk/Images/142042-marking-and-grading-assuring-ocr-s-accuracy.pdf>.



## Question 1. Assess the effectiveness of Aristotle's four causes in explaining the world.

*This essay was done in timed conditions without notes and has been typed up for the purposes of this exercise.*

### Candidate A

Aristotle's four causes could be said to be effective in explaining the world because they cover every base as it were. He identified the material cause (what things are made from), the formal cause (their shape), the efficient cause (the people/processes which make them) and the final cause (why things are made). Some would argue these provide a full explanation of each thing because the causes cover the main areas to each explain something – they ask the right questions. However, it might be argued that while they may cover the main points for an inanimate object, the four causes do not satisfactorily cover intelligent life. For example, no cause explains a person's identity; I might use them to demonstrate how that person got there, but they do not cover enough depth to explain a person's unique characteristics that make up their self. In evaluation, I do not think that the world is simple or clear-cut enough to be effectively explained by Aristotle's causes.

Some might argue that Aristotle's four causes are ineffective at explaining the world, in particular the final cause, because they assume there is always a reason for things being there. Several people, e.g. R. Dawkins, would argue there is no 'why' or reason for the universe's existence: it just is. Because the final cause assumes there always to be a reason for everything, such people would find this either illogical or unproven. Aristotle simply asserts his view of there being a reason for everything without presenting an argument to show why. On the other hand, his four causes generally work out when used to explain something: if the first three provide results but we do not know its formal cause, that does not mean to say they are all useless – there is just a gap in our knowledge. In my view, I would argue that just because we may not know a reason for something, that does not mean there isn't one. Thus in this case I think the four causes have not been shown to be ineffective at explaining the world.

One reason why the four causes could be said to be effective in explaining the world is that they comply with Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason, which states that there is always a full explanation or reason for everything even if we do not know it. Aristotle's causes agree with this principle as they rely on the existence of an explanation for everything within the world. However, a criticism with this argument is that while it is all fine and pleasant to say there is an explanation for the world out there, if we do not know this explanation then it is of little use to us. Relating this to the question I would thus argue that Aristotle's four causes, while they might have the potential to, are not effective in fully explaining the world as they do not present a way to know the hidden meaning of the world and what is within it.

Aristotle's four causes might be argued to explain the world ineffectively because they rely on weak or faulty logic. Aristotle came up with his theories on causation by a posteriori reasoning – an empiricist, he always began his arguments with evidence from the world around him. However, some would argue that trying to explain the world by looking within it for clues is a wrong approach, as it is unlikely that the world itself contains the answer as to why it is there. One must look beyond it and use the more reliable and less subjective a priori approach and use reason alone, as this will provide a more objective answer than if one relies solely on fallible senses, which some (e.g. Plato) would say can deceive us. On the other hand, this view might be criticised if we consider that it is impossible to come up with a purely abstract theory without relating it to some of an experience. For example, Plato's theory of Forms was arrived at via an a priori approach, but he would not have been able to talk of a Form of Beauty, for example, without having already experienced beauty in the world. In my opinion, I think the ideal approach would strike a balance between the two – rely largely on more objective reasoning, but relate it to our practical experience to keep it realistic. In relation to Aristotle's four causes, I would say that he relied too much on empiricism and the world around him; he should have stood back a little and used a little more abstract reasoning to have made his four causes more effective at explaining the world.

In conclusion, therefore, I do not think that Aristotle's four causes are entirely successful in explaining the world, mainly because I think that the world and what is in it is too complex to be explained by an approach as simple as Aristotle's causes.

*A clear statement of the four causes, but the paragraph is argument-driven in that it begins with a statement of a possible strength. The candidate's style throughout is clear and, while sometimes formulaic, they make a point for or against, show AO1 and then analyse and evaluate the point that they made.*

*The candidate could have included the possible jump that Aristotle makes to a Prime Mover, but equally the paragraph is solidly argued.*

*The examiner needs to read beyond the style as much as possible. Here the style is colloquial but this should not detract from the mark if the content and/or analysis is credible.*

*Some confusion in this paragraph but the candidate is showing a useful line of argument.*

## Candidate A (cont)

### Examiner commentary

The essay feels holistic and the candidate has made good use of the 35 minutes available to them. A different candidate could have taken the essay in a very different direction.

The mark it would get depends each summer on the whole process of standardisation, which considers the big picture of the year's scripts – coming up with a definitive mark would require the reading of many more scripts to get a level and certainly a mark.

However, the essay seems to meet the AO1 criteria for level 5. There are some less well-phrased sections but the examiner marks positively.

At AO2 the clear line of argument helps the candidate reach level 5.

What this would look like as a grade depends on a process that happens after all/most of the scripts are marked and depends on a number of factors, including candidate performance across the board.

## Question 2. 'Individual religious experience does not make sense of belief in God.' Discuss .

*This essay was done in timed conditions without notes and has been typed up for the purposes of this exercise.*

### Candidate B

Religious experiences are individual, they occur to people in different ways. The experience itself doesn't necessarily have to mean you've seen God, but any religious figure, which worships God or has importance to him, like Mother Mary or Jesus Christ, possibly a saint.

Many religious figures have experienced a realm of the divine, particularly St Teresa. From a young age, she experienced the power of God and chose later on to give her life to him. What she experienced was enough to make her a believer. Usually, when someone has a religious experience their behaviour begins to change in several ways. They become more religious, more active within their community, they lead more humble lives or spread the Good news to others. This is also known as the fruits of conversion. If someone is willing to convert, just through experience something omnibenevolent then it shows that the event was significant enough for them to change. Other (atheists) may disagree with this and say that there is no proof within the experience that it was a religious one or if it even occurred, due to this they believe that either the person is lying or they hallucinated, and thought they experienced something powerful. This can be caused with a lack of vitamin B and D. Therefore it's possible that the belief of God isn't genuine.

Individual religious experiences are personal. They can happen whilst being asleep or even during the day. St Bernadette was a young girl from Fatima in France. Her religious experience was with Mother Mary, this happened whilst she was a child. If it didn't make sense to believe in God, then he wouldn't have sent Mary to visit a child. The fact that this story doesn't sound realistic makes it even more unbelievable and doesn't make any sense to believe in God. But what kept her was her faith for God, as a result a small fountain of what began coming out of the ground. Others may disagree and state the fact that she was a child, so she could have been lying. Being a poor girl she lacked in food, therefore could have been nutritionally deficient. Also, what she may have believed to be Mother Mary could have been something else, like a statue or maybe she was imagining it. Being a child anything is possible and therefore some would agree and say it makes no sense in the belief of God.

Individual religious experiences can be endured through the misuse of toxins, such as alcohol, drugs and other uplifting substances. Sometimes our brains trick us to believe something is true, so if it were to smoke drugs and every time this happened, you say 'God or Jesus'. It's not to say it was from God, because it was forced by something not from God. Also, sometimes as individuals we can lie to ourselves to make ourselves feel better, religious experiences are natural, so if they are from God there's no need to help them occur through substance. But Christians would disagree and say that God 'saved' the individual because he chose to reveal himself when the person needed help. The use of drugs or misuse of alcohol is seen as sinful so for God to show himself means he wants you to believe in him. That's why individual experiences are a reason to believe in God.

A religious experience, enhanced or natural, is still a revelation from God, therefore having belief makes sense and shows acceptance and self-surrender. To someone who would want physical evidence it would make sense because they believe in facts rather than themselves.

*Showing an awareness of the importance of the results or fruits of a religious experience, which was important to William James, among others.*

*Analysis of the causes of a religious experience, which while it could be further developed gains some credit.*

*General analysis of Bernadette's vision in Lourdes (not Fatima). This analysis is made in very general terms characterised by assertion.*

*The candidate is trying to make a further point about physiological influences but loses track somewhat.*

## Candidate B (cont)

### Examiner commentary

It is perhaps unclear what the candidate's conclusion is.

The mark it would get depends each summer on the whole process of standardisation, which considers the big picture of the year's scripts – coming up with a definitive mark would require the reading of many more scripts to get a level and certainly a mark.

This essay shows the importance of positive marking as there are some areas that gain credit. The candidate has clearly recalled some of their learning on the topic, especially the arguments against the validity of religious experience. At AO1 the candidate seems to meet all the criteria for level 2.

At AO2 the analysis is characterised by assertion but it is certainly present and would also be in level 2.

What this would look like as a grade depends on a process that happens after all/most of the scripts are marked and depends on a number of factors, including candidate performance across the board.



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